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AMERICAN GAME SHOOTING

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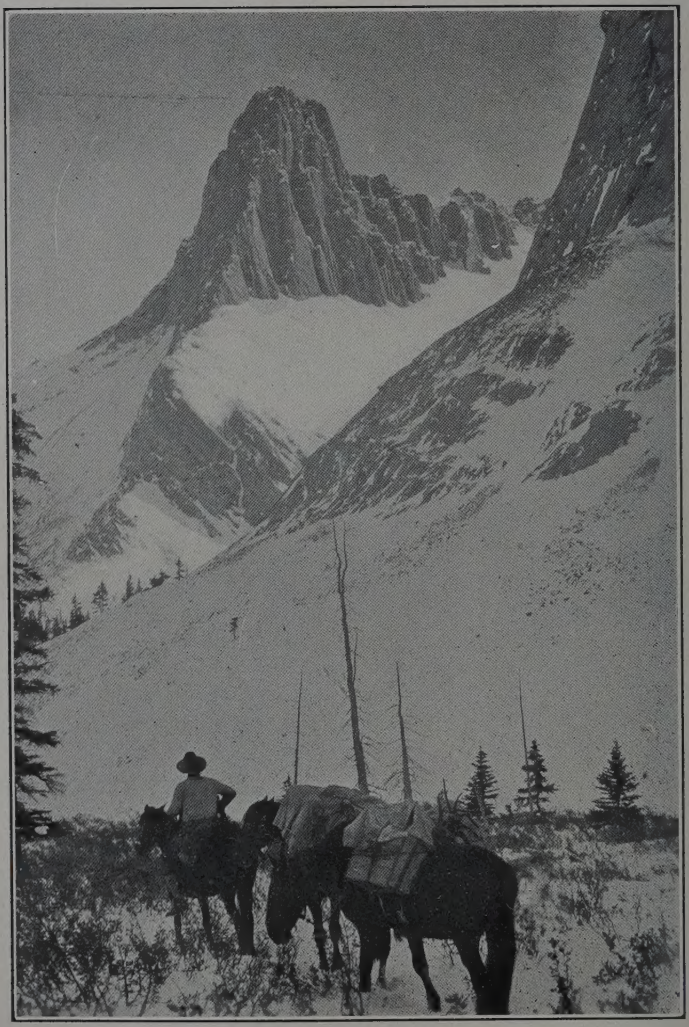

One of God's first temples.
Coming through Eagle's Nest Pass—Alberta, 1926

AMERICAN GAME SHOOTING

BY

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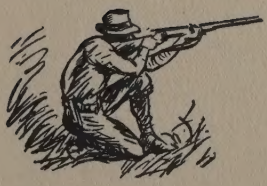
Sporting Firearms of Today in Use

SHOOTING EDITOR OF "FIELD & STREAM"



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TO

E. Bartlett Hayward

Who has afforded
me many of my
finest days afield.

117709

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FOREWORD

In my previous volume, "Sporting Firearms of Today in Use," I endeavored to assist the sportsman in the selection of his battery or the proper gun for the sport in view, having in mind always the most up-to-date weapon of approved design for his purpose. The conclusions reached were in all cases derived from my own practical experiences afield, during twenty years with all kinds of sporting arms.

Likewise, in writing this volume to help the young sportsman, or the old one too, when he is in quest of new species, or shooting under what may be to him, novel conditions, I have adhered strictly to what my own experience has taught me to believe was best, and I have not drawn upon my own imagination or the advice of others.

It will be observed that I have not included "Wapiti," or American Elk and Antelope. The curtain will soon ring down forever on elk shooting on the North American continent. Today they can only be legally killed in small portions

of Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. Antelope, despite protection, have decreased in numbers to such a discouraging degree that they will never appear on the shooting lists in this country again. The grizzly bear is in an even more precarious position and should even now be protected all over the United States.

Literally, the States have ceased to be a big game hunting country, for mountain sheep can only be killed in a restricted area in western Wyoming, and goats in Idaho. If in the somewhat distant future, it becomes possible to again shoot these species in any numbers, it will be on large private preserves, which are sure to eventually take the prominent position in our sport that they have held for centuries in Europe.

Black tail deer hunting, over that part of their range which they still inhabit, is so similar to white tail deer hunting that a special chapter is deemed unnecessary.

If my readers find that my advice does not entirely meet with their experience, I would ask them to be lenient in their judgment, remembering that North America is a large continent, and that while I have shot every species I refer to over a large part of this country and Canada,

I could not possibly have covered it all, and conditions vary sometimes radically in different localities. Nevertheless, I believe in most instances my advice will be found generally correct. In endeavoring to cover all kinds of North American shooting, I can of course speak only in generalities.

In conclusion I should like to thank the publisher of "Field and Stream" for his kind permission to reproduce certain photographs and to reprint some of the text which appeared originally in that publication.

The Author.

AMERICAN GAME SHOOTING

AMERICAN GAME SHOOTING

CHAPTER I

Fur or Feathers

WHENEVER seasoned sportsmen gather together and discuss shooting topics, the everlasting question will come up sooner or later as to which affords the most fun—fur or feathers. Naturally, both have their ardent supporters who can never be reconciled to the other fellow's point of view; and if I dare to set myself in the judicial seat it is because I have had considerable experience, and having a warm spot in my heart for all phases of shooting, feel that I am better able to hold the chair than one of the old irreconcilables. Like the Irishman who said that there was no bad whiskey but that some was better than others, I feel that both the best of big game shooting and the best of bird shooting is excellent—so take your choice.

I find that there are comparatively few sportsmen who are equally interested in fur and in feathers. In fact, very few wing shots are really interested in all phases of bird shooting. Most of those whom one meets are specialists—they may be duck shooters, or they may be confirmed partridge shooters. If duck shooters, they usually take some interest in shore birds and geese, or if they prefer the upland they are passively interested in woodcock and grouse as well as partridge (quail) and jack-snipe, but in many cases, they are unalterably confirmed in one narrow sphere as to choice; interest in any other field is rather passive.

In connection with this narrowing attitude, I have learned another thing about the average shooter: his accomplishment is very much better at the game which he prefers to hunt than it is when hunting other varieties. This is but natural — one could expect the confirmed partridge shooter to show more skill at the game of his choice than at ducks, just as you would expect the wild-fowler who scoffed at grouse to make a better showing over decoys than he would over a leash of dogs. If his skill was only attributable to the greater experience at the sport of his

choice, his opinion as to the relative merits of different species from a sporting standpoint would be valuable. As a rule he has become a wild-fowler because he appreciates the fact that he is more proficient at that branch of sport. He may not realize what the influence is that makes him better able to kill ducks than upland birds. It may be mental or physical or both. Sometimes he never discovers why, but acknowledges to himself that it is so.

These natural causes which influence his preference are many: he may be extremely nervous; the sight of ducks coming a long distance before they are in range may upset his nerves and utterly rob him of the necessary control to kill coolly and consistently. At the same time, a suddenly flushed grouse rising without warning may be comparatively easy for him. On the other hand, he may be slow of eye and movement, quite capable of a good performance on ducks in the open, yet utterly incapable where it calls for fast, snappy work. At any rate, there is no greater flatterer than success, and he eventually decides there is nothing like duck shooting, and nothing can shake his belief.

I cannot cite a better illustration than my own

case—well I remember the kindly, red-faced sportsman who induced my daddy to let him start me right. Armed with a superb little 16 bore game-gun, in a shooting jacket many sizes too large for me, the sleeves of which covered my hands, oriental fashion, I sallied forth with him day after day in a yellow-wheeled dog-cart to shoot woodcock over as fine a brace of pointers as ever stood a bird. I religiously obeyed his strict injunction never to reveal his favorite spots to any one else. My preceptor moved away; but long before I was out of school I had acquired the reputation of being about the most successful cock shooter in the township.

I longed to be a good shot at ducks, and it so happened that two of my best friends were the premier wild-fowlers of the district, so good that no one that I remember could compare with them. I would take them woodcock shooting, and to my delight beat them to a frazzle, but coming home at the end of a day on the bay, could hardly hold my head up for shame. Of a high-strung temperament, and a natural snap shot, I could not control my nerves and shoot rapidly passing ducks. The very peculiarities which made me successful in the brush spoiled me on the water.

Good for seven out of ten woodcock, I could not hit three out of ten wild-fowl, and often did worse, except when dusking black ducks, and these usually afforded quick, rising snap shots at comparatively short range, such as I was familiar with. Naturally, I came to the opinion that there was nothing like cock shooting.

Another cause of the same narrow view is environment. The sportsman who lives inland, away from the lanes which the ducks follow, is very apt to come to the opinion that the only shooting which he is familiar with, if not the best, is pretty good. Natural ability is the largest factor in the sportsman's choice. The good rifle shot usually favors big game, the wing shot, feathers. The man who is equally good with the rifle and the shotgun is rather rare. There is in consequence a wide difference of opinion, and there always will be. The cosmopolitan sportsman, he that craves new experiences and who travels far in search of sport, is the only one who usually takes a tolerant view of the many varieties of game, and the different methods, made necessary by local conditions, in pursuing them. There are a few such who derive equal pleasure from their rifles and shotguns, and they are the

only ones really capable of judging the relative merits of different sports.

To be honest, I must confess that for a steady diet I would rather shoot at feathers than at fur, except in the Canadian Rockies where one is offered a large variety of game on a single trip, under the most trying and sporting conditions. There is nothing on the American Continent that ranks with the Bighorn sheep—but unfortunately he is available to but few. Almost invariably feathers means a great many more shots are afforded, and I like to burn powder. The deer hunter goes a long distance to hunt, after a considerable outlay for the trip; he more often depends upon the guide's skill in finding the game than upon his own ability. Day after day he steals carefully through the forest, until at last he sees a buck standing at easy range. A shot rings out in the frosty stillness of the morning, the buck makes a convulsive leap and crashes to earth. The guide steps in and proceeds with the gralloch, and the sportsman is ready to leave on the first train for home. Sometimes it is a running shot, maybe several of them before he kills his deer; perhaps he goes home empty-handed and disgusted. I am but citing an average case.

I must confess that deer hunting in comparatively settled districts like the Adirondacks has no charm for me. Deer hunting, if properly conducted, calls for the highest perfection of the still hunter's art to insure continued success, but after one has killed several of them and the novelty has worn off, he reaches the point where he hates to see their beautiful forms laid out stiff and cold. Almost every good still hunter that I know blessed with a heart has reached the point where it has got to be an exceptional head or a case of necessity before he wants to kill another. For no other reason do I ever want to kill a deer again.

There is a charm to the woods that once experienced is never forgotten. The camp-fire at night, the quaintness of the guides, the total dissimilarity with our home surroundings make the vacation in the forest a complete relaxation; but there is also a charm to the careless freedom from restraint with which one can pursue upland game which to me seems lacking in the more serious pursuit of the big game: the strolling off across the pretty, rolling farm-land, the laugh and chaff with a good fellow for a companion. Bob White seldom cares how much noise you make, and sometimes the more of a row you stir up, the bet-

ter your chances are that the grouse will lay to cover. And then the dogs! To watch a pair of well matched pointers or setters vie with each other to find the birds, that is the crowning joy to the wing shot, if he has the right appreciation of the game. If the sport is good, shot after shot is afforded through the day, and I for one agree with Emerson Hough that there is quite as much excitement in shooting at a cock partridge roaring away through the chestnuts as there ever was in killing a moose. No moose ever demoralized me as a covey of quail have, times innumerable.

The usual shot at upland game is a difficult one from the wing shot's point of view. The usual big game shot is a comparatively easy one from the rifleman's standpoint. Though there are great exceptions in both cases, to me this is the crux of the argument, added to the fact that an average good day afield will afford as many shots as a whole season in the north in quest of big game.

I have shot almost every species of game hunted with rifle or shotgun from the Rio Grande to the Northern barrens and I found it all attractive, though some were more so than others.

Pheasants call for strenuous work when shot

over dogs, but despite their gameness and beauty are a clumsy, easy bird to hit once you get the knack of it.

Grouse are never thoroughly mastered, and while still very plentiful in some localities, are becoming so educated and wild that it rather hurts one's pride to take the whole day to kill the brace or two which the law now allows, particularly when one recalls the time, not so long ago, when half a dozen could more easily be secured. A few years back one would often get three or four points in one bit of cover. Today in the same country if you put up thirty birds and get three shots over your dog you are lucky.

Partridge as shot on the southern stubble fields and in the pines will ever remain the finest sport of all for the largest number of men.

Turkey hunting is a slow game that requires all of the still hunter's art and ingenuity and then some, but to me it just misses.

Jack-snipes are an extremely uncertain quantity, unless one lives close to the flighting grounds; woodcock are the same.

Goose shooting is really fine, or utterly rotten.

Shore birds fit in as a preliminary to later sport but warm weather takes a lot of zest from the

game for me. Comparatively speaking they are easy, and I have always harbored the suspicion that the man who professed a preference for shore birds was a lazy duffer.

Rail-bird shooting is almost an insult to red-blooded sportsmanship, and only practised when there is nothing else to gun.

Gray squirrels have been so remorselessly hammered by the would-be-sports with the shotgun that I no longer have the heart to take advantage of them with the rifle.

While I tried all these different varieties I was also shooting at ducks on Great South Bay, Barnegat and the Chesapeake, and I learned in time to perform upon them quite as well as I formerly had upon the woodcock, though I rather doubt that I do as well in the brush as I did of yore. I know of nothing better today than to stand on a good pass at dusk with a stout gun and pull the high ones out of the air, or to lay in a battery and make a right and left on blue-bills or red-heads.

These are my personal conclusions—they will be at variance with many sportsmen's views—for which God be thanked, or there would be no more ducks and partridge left for me. After

all the true sportsman does not gauge the value entirely by the number of heads that he bags. The other things incidental to the actual shooting play a big part in our choice. Who would want to kill a moose if he could get all he wanted in Central Park? It is the majesty, and the vastness, of the great Northern woods and barrens which draw the sportsman back there year after year, with a fascination that is all compelling. You get away from newspapers, fences, and telegraph wires, battle with nature for existence, realize that your ability to kill does not only mean a trophy for your den, but that you must do so to eat. Nature has a never ending and always interesting story to tell but she softly whispers it, and you cannot hear her in the busy city streets. To me it is a never tiring source of interest to be in the silent places; yet I have seen those who were appalled and depressed by it so that they were never happy until the start for home was made.

The regrettable side of big game hunting is that the successful stalk often ends with a tinge of remorse when one stands at last over the trophy that he has gone so far to kill. The hardships, labor, expense, and bitter disappointment

of previously unsuccessful excursions are forgotten in the elation of accomplishment, yet I confess that as I have watched the life light slowly fade in the dying Bighorn's eyes, I would often wish that he was again standing proudly above me—despite the fact that a few moments before I would have risked anything to secure him. Particularly is this true when one is hunting far from the settlements where it is impossible to save anything but the head and horns. It is quite true that an old bull is so tough that one could not possibly relish it, yet the unsightly pile of flesh left on the ground to rot is not gratifying to one of refinement.

There is no such feeling in connection with the shooting of feathered game. One's conscience is entirely clear unless he is guilty of being a game hog. Most of us have been, at one time or another in our shooting career, but if we are sportsmen worthy of the name one lesson is sufficient. I had almost decided to give up rifle shooting, when a friend situated in the heart of a good woodchuck country invited me to visit him, and then I went "cuckoo" again. There were more woodchuck in the neighborhood of his backyard than I ever knew existed. Never have I had

any sport that required such a combination of skill with the rifle and the stalker's best efforts, as that afforded by our lowly little friend, "Bro" woodchuck.

Today I would rather shoot partridge over dogs, ducks from a battery, or woodchuck and mountain sheep with a rifle than anything else that I can think of, but what's the use of arguing about it? Every year the North lures me back again, yet if some fellow came along this minute with a couple of noisy beagles and said let's go rabbit shooting, I would jump for a gun and have as much fun as at anything else.

CHAPTER II

Partridge Shooting

FROM the earliest beginning of American shooting annals, the partridge has been eulogized by sporting authorities. Admittedly the ace of upland game birds, it is but natural that writers gifted with the skill to extol his praise should put forth their best efforts in affording him his just dues—particularly as they were sure of hearty endorsement.

I am sure that if a vote were taken among the upland shooters of this country and those continental sportsmen who have shot him under appropriate conditions, the American partridge would win first place by a large plurality; and although I have written more or less constantly on sporting subjects for the past ten years, and probably have killed more partridge than any other species, I have studiously avoided him as a subject for my pen.

Hang it all, where is a fellow to begin? What

is he to say that has not already been said in the inimitable style of the old preceptors. Read Frank Forrester or Edwin Sandy and you will realize how helpless I feel to contend with my subject.

I am not a good imitator, nor are dissertations upon the autumnal foliage, blue sky, and heart thrills my forte, yet I have had a wide experience with the partridge and have just finished one of my most successful seasons in shooting him. All of which have brought home to me the fact that we are in a transitory period, and this wisest of little birds is changing his style to cope with altered conditions. Perhaps, therefore, with a declaration of the causes for his prominent position in the field, I can best devote these comments to the most successful methods of pursuit and the equipment involved from the 1927 standpoint.

My readers from different parts of the country may be confused by my use of the name partridge. In New York, New England, New Jersey and Eastern Canada, the rough grouse is commonly known as a partridge, and the real partridge *Colinus Virginianus* as a quail. From Maryland south the latter is invariably afforded his real title, though the Southerner who recog-

nizes him as a true partridge, makes a similar error in calling the rough grouse a pheasant. There is no finer grouse than *Bonasa Umbellus* nor a partridge to compare with Bob White as some would jocularly call him—to end this senseless controversy, but partridge he ever was and shall remain.

To continue, he is preëminently the one which has best withstood the inroads of advancing civilization upon his natural domain. Being ever neighborly, a creature of the hedgerows and stubbles, he prefers cultivated fields to the more lonely stretches, capitalizing upon the clearing of the land, and is in consequence always accessible.

He is still to be found more generally distributed throughout the country and in greater numbers than any other species of our upland game, and affords more shots to the mile. To illustrate, a few seasons back, while shooting in one of the best farming sections of a densely populated Middle Atlantic State, in four days within a radius of two miles of my host's home, we put up twenty-two covies and averaged twenty-four birds a day to two guns. No sportsman would ask for more.

Of all our birds he lies best to the dog, with the

one exception of the woodcock. He is capable of carrying off more shot for his weight than any other bird that flies. He is sturdy and will best withstand the draughts or the rainy season the heat of the tropics or the snows of winter equally well, provided feed is plentiful. He is not migratory and therefore a more certain quantity to contend with year by year, and last but most important, he affords the most difficult shooting of any upland game. I know this will be challenged by the hunters of the Northern states who extend the palm to the rough grouse, but times are changing and Bob White is becoming more difficult each season.

Grouse are more frequently missed because they rise farther from the gun and seldom lie to the dog. They fly no faster and carry no more shot and I would in consequence prefer to hunt the partridge in timber as he is just as sporting a quarry and affords more shooting.

In the old days when partridge were invariably shot in the stubble, they were very much easier — quite as easy as the occasional rough grouse that we still find on an open hill side, under a thorn-apple bush, or in an orchard, but the partridge is learning and following the good

example set by his bigger brother. On the trip mentioned above, the twenty-four covies flushed, afforded one field shot. The birds were, in every case, found in the woods or thick branches where shooting was most difficult.

I can well remember the days when we never followed up a covey. Seven years ago, in the same country, my game register shows that one morning between nine and eleven-thirty we flushed thirteen covies, killing twenty-six birds and never followed a single. These days are passing, and from Georgia and Carolina—north and west, I hear the same story. The partridge is becoming a bird of the woods, and when he does come out, makes a quick job of his meals, and scuttles back to cover early, stealing forth again late in the afternoon.

This new condition is making the partridge increasingly difficult, for when he takes to the woods—being quite as fast and very much smaller—he is, to say the least, just as difficult as the rough grouse that lays to be flushed and gives us a fair chance of bagging him. So, in saying that the partridge is as difficult to kill, I would take this into consideration; and certainly

the fact that he lays better is in his favor from the sportsmen's point of view.

It has always been the opinion of authorities that the morning hours, from eight to eleven, and the evening from four till dark were the best times to hunt, but due to the changing conditions, he doesn't idle afield as of yore except in the outlying districts where least molested. One who would confine his shooting to the choice hours would most often have but a poor bag to show for his efforts. Many of us have dreamed of large bags killed under such ideal condieions, be it upland game or wild-fowl. It may be in granddad's days such feats could be performed, yet I doubt it. Twenty-five years' experience afield and conversation with many of the most expert sportsmen of the near past, convinces me that except on the rarest occasions, big bags were only acquired as a result of untiring all-day work on behalf of crack shots over excellent dogs in a comparatively easy hunting country where birds were unusually plentiful.

Today if one desires to kill his limit, he may with the exception of some of the Gulf States, rest assured before starting that it will be as a

result of a full day afield, getting into the scrubs and brush with his dogs. Stubble shooting is rapidly becoming a thing of the past.

This naturally brings up the question of the dog. The original pointer and setter was one of the big-bone, slow type, still favored by the grouse shooters of the North who require caution rather than speed. Slowly the type changed, the demand being for speed on the part of the southern partridge shooters and the chicken shooters of the west. Field trial breeders improved (?) the type until the American F. T. W. became the finest exponents of selective breeding.

Admitting the strength, speed, and stamina of this marvelous type, I question more and more its desirability for practical work. Formerly one would canter along on a reliable old horse or mule—the dogs quartering back and forth ahead like flashing spots of white against the dun-colored stubble, to pull up into a point in the twinkling of an eye, whereupon we dismounted, sauntering forward, flushed the covey —shot, gathered the birds, and were off to the next field, priding ourselves upon our modern methods.

The Ford has supplanted the old horse, and

the fastest dogs could not keep abreast of it even if one could go across country, which barbed-wire procludes. The birds are not out in the center of the large stubbles and so the dogs ride the tonneau—we motor to a stubble along a good road, park the car, climb the fence and immediately hustle into the covert nearby to fight briars, and shoot birds. The field trial type doesn't understand this work. Most of the time he is out of sight and doesn't know just what is expected of him.

I have known exceptions. Well I remember old Laddie—"God bless his Doggie soul." I can see him as if yesterday, racing across the field, head and tail high, up and down the centre and around all four sides of a ten-acre stubble before I was one-third of the way across it. Suddenly he would snap into a distorted point as if stricken by a bolt from above, or he would work like a slow-motion picture on singles, even come and take you to a bird when you lost sight of him, and head off runners to perfection; but alas, such dogs as Laddie are scarce.

More and more, due to the birds' increasing wariness, I find a tendency to return to the slower type for most of one's shooting will be on singles

in cover, where a good old-timer that works carefully and doesn't over run half his birds, is worth two of the speedsters.

For the same reason I am slowly but surely favoring the heavily coated setter to the pointer. Ten years ago nothing could have drawn such a confession from me, but the facts cannot be denied. Where one must continually fight green briars and blackberry bushes from daylight until dark, the setter can stand up to it where no one but an inhuman brute would force a pointer.

This change in our shooting conditions has strengthened my contention that the light twelve-bore would eventually supplant to a great extent the growing popularity of the twenty. The twenty is of course, acknowledged to be in no ways as desirable a weapon for the average shooter who doesn't kill on more than twenty-five per cent of his shots. When a man is an expert and kills seventy-five per cent of his birds, it is time for him seriously to consider the small bore, closer-shooting gun or he will rob his sport of much of its attractiveness. The soul of sport is competition. If we have too much advantage over our opponent, there is not much satisfaction in beating him, and so the expert can well afford

to use a closer-shooting gun; but it naturally follows, a weapon with choke barrels will smash the birds so badly at short range when a full charge is used, that he must at the same time decrease the weight of the charge. A cylinder-bore twenty is no greater handicap than a cylinder-bore twelve. The point is, in using a twenty we must invariably choose a closer barrel. The question of bore can be left to the shooter.

There is one point on which there is no room for argument: and this is the unsportsmanlike tendency to use the twelve-bore automatic for upland shooting. There is a legitimate excuse, as I have said so often, for shooting an automatic on open water for wild-fowl. It is in many instances under such conditions the humane gun to use in quickly dispatching cripples before they escape. The unprincipled use of cylinder-bore automatics by the poor whites in the South is to a large extent responsible for the gradually decreasing number of partridge in some districts in the last few years. Any sportsman worthy of the name should be satisfied with two shots at a rise.

If I desired to take advantage of all my opportunities I would invariably take from my case

a twelve-bore of about 6½ lbs. weight with 28 or 30 inch barels to give a forty-five per cent pattern in the right and fifty-five to sixty per cent in the left for partridge shooting. Being human, and liking to flatter myself, I frequently use a twenty. It, of course, goes without saying that it should be a single trigger ejector, loaded with No. 8 Shot.

Clothing is not subject to much change. Canvas and gabardine were always the best for coat and breeches, together with high water-tight boots and light pigskin leggings. The need for such durable apparel is of course, most apparent when one has to go in with the dogs to find his game and let me add at this time that any sportsman worthy of the name will do so. One who desires to hold the respect of his canine friends and get the most out of them, will be the first in the briars, and call them after him. Rest assured that if it is too thick for your canvas, it is entirely too sharp for their coats.

If there is any one point on which my advice might be more valuable than any other, it would be in regard to self-control. Had I the receipe for giving this priceless asset to young shooters, and many old ones too, I could mass a goodly

fortune in return. As in everything else, practice makes perfect. There is no royal road to success in the shooting field or any other. Persistence and practice, with thought, are the most important things.

Grouse and partridge sadly fluster many old timers and almost all beginners. You will never get over this, and if you could the sport would lose its charm; but you can learn to control it, and if after a few seasons' trial, you cannot restrain the desire to let off both barrels as quickly as possible on a flushed bird, deliberately handicap yourself by leaving the first barrel unloaded. If this doesn't help, get another to go with you as gun bearer with the strict injunction that he shall never hand you your gun until a bird is flushed, and always repeat in your ear, "Shoot carefully." This in the end will invariably bear fruit. If it doesn't, the case is hopeless.

In hunting partridge it is well to remember that whether field or covert shooting it is to defeat your best chances to start too early. Many impatient sportsmen will hustle off as soon as it is light. There is no logical excuse for this. You are sure to over-run some of the birds in the most likely places before they are astir, and the dogs

will not locate them easily until they have moved about to feed, and this they do not do as a rule until the sun is well up, offering the attractiveness of its warmth to that of breakfast. Nor will you find them far from water—if there are no springs or swails in the neighborhood, you had better look elsewhere for your birds.

CHAPTER III

Grouse Shooting

THE Ruffed Grouse makes a strong bid for the title of King of American game birds, for of all feathered varieties of game found on this continent he is one of the sportiest and most difficult to bag, and offers the finest tests of a sportsman's skill by his hardihood and resourcefulness.

The man, who at the end of a hard day's tramp through the hills of New England, New York, or Pennsylvania in quest of the grouse returns with a couple of brace in the pocket of his game-coat, may well feel proud of his achievement.

Nor need he feel ashamed of his score if on counting his unused shells he finds that his ammunition bill is four to one in the birds favor.

The grouse is the last bird in the world on which to save shells and the old timer will always avail himself of every possible chance to kill, no matter how small it is. No other bird is so quick

to take advantage of every bit of natural cover which will conceal its flight, or stop a load of shot.

In looking over my game register, I find that in 1912 when I did a great deal of woodcock and grouse shooting, my average on cocks was 68 per cent hits, and on grouse 33 per cent. However, the cover was particularly thin that year as the leaves were off early and birds were plentiful. My scores never ran as high before or since.

I have killed doubles on grouse and run four or five straight kills, but I have more often used up four or five shells without scoring.

I am always skeptical of the local expert who seldom misses his grouse. I have hunted with several of them in various localities, and have always found that either his skill was grossly exaggerated or he was a pokey, careful hunter who would not waste a shell, and never fired unless reasonably sure of a kill.

When I was a boy I often went home heartily ashamed of myself because the better part of a box of shells was missing and I only had a bird or two to show for them. Today I shoot better, yet the same thing often happens, only it no

longer bothers me, for I know from experience that the fame of most of my boyhood heroes was a myth. The man who does not avail himself of every fair sporting chance offered is not entitled to be called a fine shot, and however straight he shoots he will miss a lot of grouse, if he takes them.

Yet it is the very difficulty of the shooting that is one of its greatest charms, and each well made shot stands out in memory after the shooting of other game is only remembered in general.

To be a successful grouse hunter one must be more than a good shot, he must be a student of the game he pursues. Learn to know its habits well, and particularly upon what it is feeding. For in grouse shooting you can depend but little upon your dog. It is no exaggeration to say that out of twenty birds flushed in a day not more than four or five will lay for the dog to point be he ever so careful. Therefore the best dog is generally a slow, old setter that is satisfied to point at from twenty to thirty feet of the birds.

One reason for this is that the grouse is very often found in very heavy timber where the underbrush is extremely thick above a man's knees, but is thin on a level with the ground so that the

birds can easily see the approach of a dog or man at a considerable distance. This is particularly true when the birds are in the mountain laurel and rhododendrons, to which they take late in the fall when the other cover gets too thin to afford sufficient protection.

The most difficult time to kill a grouse is when the leaves are falling, in the early part of October. The birds are always extremely nervous at that time as the rattle of the dry leaves keeps up a constant noise that makes it difficult for them to hear the approach of their enemies and they are constantly on the alert, and flush on the slightest provocation.

As an illustration of this, I was on a five day trip a few seasons ago in the middle of October. It had been very warm and as a result the foliage was almost as thick as in midsummer. The night before I started we had an extremely heavy frost which knocked the leaves off in clouds, and in the first two days I killed only three birds. Giving it up in disgust on the third day I devoted my attention to rabbits. That night it started to rain and kept at it steadily for the next couple of days. Knowing that it was my only chance to bring home a decent sized bag I hunted steadily

in the rain, easily killing my limit in two days, and having excellent sport.

I have found since that if one is willing to put up with the discomfort of a wet skin there is no better time to hunt grouse than in the rain, as they will lie close and afford excellent shots. First, because they do not like to break cover in the wet; secondly, because they do not hear your approach on the soft, sodden ground and also the dog gets a good scent; that is of course, providing the rain is not so severe as to wash it out quickly.

A little trick which I discovered was helpful, when attempting to approach where you know birds are, is to whistle softly some tune as you walk along. The human voice arouses almost all game, but whistling is not familiar to them, and attracts their curiosity as well, allaying their suspicions that you are looking for them. Along the same lines, never try to creep stealthily towards the birds. Their eyes and ears will defeat your best efforts and they will take alarm and flush much quicker than they would if you went rapidly along with no efforts at concealment. They will then often lie close, trusting to their ability to hide until you are almost on top of them.

Unlike quail (partridge) it is better to follow up a marked-down grouse as quickly as possible, as it tends to make them lie closer. After following up a bird rapidly two or three times it will generally give a good, close-in shot.

It is a great mistake to get out too early in the morning for grouse, as they will be down in the bottoms to feed. Later, when the sun is well up, they retire to the ridges and more open places to sun themselves and pick up chestnuts. On killing a bird, it is well to open his crop, and ascertain upon what it has been feeding. This will give you a line on where to hunt.

The favorite food of the grouse in October is the seeds of wild grapes and apples, and where you find these vines abundant, or in a deserted orchard, there under protection of the vines or apple trees you will find the birds. Another of their favorites is the red partridge-berries which are found so plentiful in some districts. When these are not to be had they will subsist on whortle-berries, etc., until late in the winter, when they rely almost entirely for their subsistence on the buds of the mountain laurel, where it exists.

Frank Forrester says in his writings that he has followed the track of a single ruffed grouse

as far as twelve miles a day in the snow, showing that they will depend upon their legs unless frightened, and travel great distances.

Another thing to be remembered is that the grouse needs a lot of water, and they will stay near a spot where there is clear running water or a spring. Never hunt where you know that they could not find fresh water nearby.

Always watch carefully when passing a windfall or the tops of spruce that have been cut down and left as they fell by lumbermen, as the birds delight to lie under the protection of such cover, from which it is easy for them to get out in a hurry. And when one is flushed, always load quickly as more are likely to be nearby, and they seldom jump together as is the habit of quail (partridge), but get up singly.

When a cock is heard drumming there are usually other birds in the vicinity.

I once knew a man who shot a good many birds by decoying them, imitating the drumming of the cock bird. He would swell out his chest and hold his breath at the same time pounding upon his chest with his fists, making a perfect imitation of the bird's love call. But no sportsman would countenance such low practice, also

it was very slow work and uncertain as one would never deceive a bird but once and then had to move on to another locality and wait a while before drumming. There are numerous other dirty tricks resorted to to lure this noble bird, but they are beneath a sportsman's contempt.

I have never known a feeling of greater satisfaction than that derived by dropping a fine old grouse as he soared away from almost beneath my feet.

Whether the bird shows the slightest sign of being hit or not make it a hard and fast rule to follow up every one shot at, for often they will carry off a load of shot with no apparent sign of being hit, only to fall dead a hundred yards away. Never refuse a chance shot, for many a bird out of sight will be brought down by a well directed snap ahead in line with its flight.

I recall one such instance when I flushed a bird from under a large hemlock, and catching a fleeting glimpse of him I threw the muzzle of my gun ahead of his line of flight a couple of feet and fired through the thick brush, walking to the other side, to my surprise I found the largest

grouse that I had ever killed, stone dead. This bird weighed twenty-five ounces.

For grouse shooting I find for myself that the most satisfactory gun is a light 12 guage of about 6½ to 7 lbs. weight, with 30 inch cylinder barrels or one modified choke—with an automatic ejector—loaded with 26 grains of dense powder and a charge of one and one-eighth ounce of 7½ chilled shot. Late in the fall when the birds are wild and the cover gets thin I use No. 6 shot in the left barrel, for one often gets long shots at that season.

In conclusion, respect this noble bird by giving him his proper name. In New York and New England he is commonly called a partridge, and in Pennsylvania and the South, a pheasant. But grouse he is and should be called. There are no native pheasants in this country, and the only partridge on the East Coast is the Bob White, commonly called quail in the North and properly called partridge in the South.

The early settlers in this country were confused by our native birds, and did not recognize our Bob White as a partridge, because he was so much smaller than his English cousin. But be-

cause he resembled the quail of Southern Europe, which is a migratory bird, they named him after that family, to which he is not related.

They assumed that our Ruffed Grouse was a partridge because of his meat was not dark like the English grouse, but white like their partridge.

The Southerners recognized Bob as a true partridge, and called him such, but for some unaccountable reason nicknamed the grouse a pheasant, probably for want of a better one, and because of his rather long tail, and because he was found in the woods.

The grouse family are the grandest game birds in the world, and the best of the breed is the Ruffed Grouse—give him his proper name.

CHAPTER IV

Pheasant Shooting

THE pheasant is not a native of North America, but they have increased so much in various parts of the country since they were first turned out that a book on shooting would hardly be complete without a chapter devoted to their pursuit.

Being hardy and adaptable as well as prolific to a degree they have spread out to such an extent that in many localities in northern New York, New Jersey, some Central States and particularly on the West Coast in Washington and Oregon they have already become the backbone of all upland shooting, supplanting the native birds which were not as capable of contending with advancing civilization.

Did you ever shoot pheasants in the month of October with a good shot for a companion, and a pair of spaniels or beagles to find them for you? If you have not you have missed a chapter in your hunting career. You question the use

of hound dogs for birds perhaps? So did I, as any other dyed in the wool bird hunter would, but let me tell you, your stately setter or pointer would be sadly out of place walking up the Ring Necks in the vineyards of Yates County. For the Chinaman does not lie well to the point and if there is any cover at all he will run on and on for an interminable distance before the bird dog, causing him to false point continually, while the beagle can easily follow him because of his strong scent, though not as fast as he would a rabbit, merrily giving tongue the while and if your wind is good and you can keep pace with him, you will be able to get a shot when he flushes.

On the other hand, the shooting of Ring Necks over bird dogs is rather tame for the good shot, true he has plenty of speed when once he gets under way, but he is rather slow when flushed, that is in comparison with the partridge or ruffed grouse, and there is seldom an excuse for the cool hand to miss, despite the tremendous racket which he makes when he rises, which will badly fluster the novice. That is another reason why I favor the spaniel for walking him up, it will not only save your young bird dog from ruination, but they will rise farther ahead of you, from

twenty to thirty yards, as a rule, and this, together with the unexpectedness of the shot, and the fact that you are often out of breath from running over the rough ground, stumbling through tag weeds and briars, makes it strenuous work and a severe test of skill.

But whether pointer, setter, spaniel or hound is used, a good dog is indispensable, for the pheasant has no equal in his ability to hide successfully in thin cover. I have seen these big, gaudy Mongolians hide themselves away in a scarcely covered field where one would think that not even a sparrow could conceal itself, and then spring unexpectedly from almost beneath my feet where he had been lying. Yet, despite the fact that they have spread out prolifically in some sections of New York State since they were turned out in the Eighties, so that fifty or sixty can often be found in the course of a day (even though the farmer's boy does sometimes pot his chicken out of season from beneath a hedge row), one could still hunt all day without a dog and not see a bird.

It is a beautiful and inspiring sight indeed, when one flushes an old cock and his harem in an open field—with the sun shining on their glori-

ous plumage—and what an infernal racket they make between the loud cackling of the cocks and the beating of their wings, and here let me inject a good bit of advice: after flushing a nide of them, always hunt diligently along the edge of the adjoining woods and hedge rows, for there are pretty apt to be several amorous young cocks nearby that the old despot has driven away from his family.

It should also be remembered that the pheasant requires a lot of water and though they are great travelers, will as a rule not be found far from it. For that reason one should hunt by preference the low lands, particularly the bottoms and swamps, where they are apt to roost and lay up in, during the day after feeding, where they are much hunted.

One should, however, watch out for their dusting places in dry ground, and not neglect either old fields or new stubble, for like the proverbial flea, they go everywhere.

The native hunters consider him a hard bird to bag, but then usually they have little else in the vicinity to judge by, and I rather attribute their high estimation of him to the fact that they universally use No. 4 shot, and sometimes even

No. 3 in their usually cheap guns, which naturally leads to very uncertain pattern at the ranges which most of the birds must be killed. But the cool hand, I think, should account for about seventy per cent of his birds; that is, when armed with a suitable weapon. I would prefer a light, twelve-bore improved cylinder in the right barrel and full choke in the left—charged with a trap load of No. 7½ chilled shot in the right, and 1⅛ No. 6 in the left, propelled by 3¼ drams of powder. One is then prepared for either a close shot in cover or a long one in the open field, and no one can predict which will come first.

The common fault is to shoot behind the bird—pheasants are large and their long tail feathers tend to greatly accentuate their length; as they flap up one is quite likely not to lead them sufficiently, despite the fact that they are comparatively slow at the start. Once under headway they make good time, which again throws one off. In fact I have it from an unquestioned British authority that when under full steam they have been observed to catch up to and easily pass grouse and partridge in the air.

Spare the hens; it is unlawful to shoot them in most states and should be, for it is the polygamous

habits of the cock that has made them so successful as a game bird. Spare the hens and leave a couple of cocks to each farm, and there will be plenty of birds the next season.

The Ring Neck is sure to attain the importance on the private game preserve in this country that it has in Europe, and when driven over the waiting guns, becomes a quarry difficult enough to tax the experts skill to the limit.

The sportiest shot I have had in this country has been as Gun for the American Springer Spaniel Field Trials held at Fisher's Island each October, where I have officiated for the past few seasons, averaging about twenty Ring Necks a day, my best bag being eighteen grassed out of twenty shot at, which proves my contention that they are not difficult if one is properly armed and keeps cool.

CHAPTER V

Woodcock Shooting

IT MAY be because the writer's first experience in wing shooting as a boy was at woodcock, but at all events, I know that there is no game that flies that is so alluring to me today, or that I would sooner hunt.

Surely, no sound can warm the cockles of a sportsman's heart like the fascinating twitter of the illusive "timber-dudle" as he flushes from your feet and hustles away in his erratic fashion —an indistinct brown ball rapidly disappearing through the white birch or alders.

The writer has followed him along our coasts from Nova Scotia to Virginia, and in this persistent pursuit has learned many things about his habits that would escape the notice of one who treated the woodcock as most do: as an accident, only to be shot at while in quest of other game.

Woodcock shooting may be divided into two classes: native bird shooting, and flight bird shooting. By native birds is meant those that

stay in a certain section all the year around, or spend the Spring and Summer there to breed.

Due to the better game legislation in later years, the native bird shooting has been greatly restricted and has led to a general increase in the number of birds.

When the writer was a boy, it was the habit to shoot cocks from July first on; indeed, the laws of most of the northern states sanctioned this practice; which Frank Forrester as long ago as 1846 deplored as being improvident and unfair to the birds.

In the warm weather the birds lie close together in favored spots, and are not found so widely scattered as in the Fall; and when flushed rise on a slow, uncertain flight, generally to drop down again within twenty or thirty yards of their first resting place, affording shots that the veriest tyro would seldom miss were it not for the heavy foliage at this season of the year.

Often in the Summer I have gone to some well-known woodcock haunt, and, on stepping into the cover, frequently had two or three birds rise slowly together and fly a few yards weakly, to pitch down again almost in sight.

Also they are never in as good a condition then

as later on in the season; indeed the young birds are often small and unfit for the table.

Not so your big, husky, October cock, who hustles away on quick, strong wings in a manner to defy your best efforts.

Another trick resorted to in extremely dry weather, when water was scarce, was to lie by some small secluded pond at dusk, and shoot birds as they came in to drink and drill on the banks.

To sum it all up, it did not require much skill to bag them at this season of the year; and the sport was poor.

Fortunately the day for it has passed. The woodcock is one of the first birds to come North in the Spring, and generally starts South with the first severe frost. And it is then that the flight shooting starts in all the charm of the early autumnal foliage, and the crisp, cold air.

The time of the big flight varies from year to year, according to the weather. But experience has led me to expect the best shooting in Connecticut, lower New York, and New Jersey about the 15th or 20th of October, although of late years it has been somewhat slower, coming in the first two weeks of November.

By that time the birds that nested and reared their families in Maine and Canada, generally begin to fall into their old resting places on bright moonlight nights — places where they have stopped year after year on their autumnal migration.

And this is the greatest secret of successful woodcock shooting: learn their favorite haunts. For, as sure as they go to one place this year, so will they stop there next year and bring their families also, if not all shot out.

For this reason, certain spots in all localities remain famous for woodcock. Consequently you might go year after year to some spot that looked fitting in every way, and never find a bird, while each season they were stopping in some place grown up into big timber nearby, where you had never thought of looking for them.

When but a lad, the writer was the protégé of two old sportsmen whose hobby was woodcock shooting and who had been hunting the locality near my home for years. Sworn to secrecy they took me with them and taught me all the good spots for flight birds. Years later, when they had ceased to hunt there, the writer was killing good bags of woodcock day after day to the

Nova Scotia Woodcock

Result of three hours in the battery illustrated—two guns and fifty red-heads

A Chesapeake Bay point blind

chagrin of other hunters, who never killed any but stray birds here and there. And that is the general way they are treated—merely as a pleasant surprise to be taken when found, for but few people go forth especially for them.

In the summer and early fall woodcock will always be found along the edge of swamps and wet, springy places, where the ground is soft, and affords good drilling for their favorite food, worms. Hunters find them there, or know they are there by seeing their familiar drilling in the soft mud or by their large, splashy white droppings. And, when the season opens, look there for them.

But flight birds will not be found in such places, except on rare occasions, for, be it remembered, they do not like cold, which they go South to escape, and consequently do not drop in the swamp on cold nights on their way down, but light on the sunny side hills, where it is warm and dry in the day time and near good feeding.

White birch and young scrub growth is their favorite cover and affords excellent protection, as it is generally so thick, that it is the most difficult ground to shoot over. Many fine shots consider that the woodcock in such cover is the

most difficult upland game bird to bag—and indeed, they will often tax the experts' best efforts to the extreme by their bewildering flight.

To bag them successfully it is essential to be a good snapshot, for the slow, careful shot can never be sure of this bird; first the cover is so thick that, as a rule, most of the birds will have to be dropped within twenty yards of the gun or they will be out of sight; secondly, after the woodcock has gained full speed, he does not fly straight like the partridge (quail) or grouse, but becomes more erratic the further he goes, flitting here and there in so uncertain a fashion as to defy the most careful aim.

The cover is comparatively low, and when flushed the woodcock, as a rule, springs straight up from his resting place to a height of fifteen feet or so, until just clear of the top of the cover, and then takes his course along level with the tree-tops.

When one gets the knack of shooting just as the bird reaches the top of his rise, and before he starts off, he will really begin to kill woodcock. Some sportsmen seem never to be able to learn the trick of catching them just right, and as a

result, their scores remain low, for they either shoot too quickly and under the rapidly rising mark, or wait too long. My old preceptor in the art of cock shooting coached me well and, as a result, my scores have always been higher on this bird than on other upland varieties.

The successful grouse dog is generally good on woodcock, as a fast, wide ranger is not desirable. Springer spaniels are often used, and these merry little retrievers are very good indeed, as the birds lie close, and their scent is strong. For this reason they are unquestionably the very best bird on which to break the young setter or pointer.

The field spaniel is particularly good early in the season when the cover is too thick to shoot in. Due to their small size, they get around easily through the undergrowth and, as is their habit after pointing for a moment, run in and flush with sharp barks of warning as the bird rises, so that the gunner may stand out on the edge of the cover and shoot when they come over.

Of shooting in this fashion the writer recalls a memorable experience a few years before the present bag limit was enacted. When hunting along the banks of a large stream in a valley in

the upper Adirondacks, with a guide and two fine pointers, he killed 22 woodcocks in a day and a half.

The big flight was on, and the birds were found in small covers of fifty or a hundred yards in length and about as far apart. Wading through the mud and water—for it was raining hard—the guide would go in with the dogs, and after warning me of the points, would flush the birds—which he seldom saw—and when they broke cover and started for the next clump of swamp ash or alders or white birch, the writer grassed them in the open. But such numbers of birds and ideal conditions are seldom found.

Some prefer No. 9 Shot for woodcock, but as they are usually found in the same cover with grouse I find the usually accepted combination of an open bored, lightweight weapon and No. 7½ or No. 8 Chilled the most satisfactory.

CHAPTER VI

Shore Birds and Snipe

THIS sport has never been very alluring to the writer and he has seldom indulged in it except as a means to keep the hand in during an off season when there was little else to be shot.

The hot weather and the lazy style of shooting, sitting in a carelessly constructed blind, under the blazing sun of August or early September is not conducive to the highest sporting enthusiasm.

Formerly there were many varieties of shore birds to be shot which added to one's interest in it, ranging from the giant curlew to the lesser yellow-leg and many smaller birds which should always have been spared. Today most of these are protected by law, such as the curlew, dowitcher, dunlin, knot, willet and so forth. Leaving us but the greater and lesser yellow-legs and the black breasted and golden plover from which to get our sport.

Shore birds are among the first to come north in the spring and are generally poor and thin at

this time, as the weather moderates they continue on up the coast, nesting in Labrador and as far north as Greenland. Late in the summer they start south and along about the middle of August the yellow-legs and plover begin to fall in to the Great South Bay marshes on Long Island and other places along our coast. Usually, about this time, after a storm, the best shooting may be had.

When the tide is out early in the morning the gunner sets his decoy on the margin of some bay or pond in the marsh, and the blind is quickly constructed out of sea-weed, sedge grass or brush which may be handy. Sometimes a large box is sunk in the mud but this is less comfortable. The decoys are skillfully arranged a short way off up-wind, as the birds will always fly up into the wind to stool. Usually the decoys are set in the water if it is shallow, if not, on a bar. When the tide rises and drives the birds out of the marsh the rig is picked up and moved out onto the beach or shore in the same manner, and the blind constructed out of driftwood, etc. Then the gunner waits for the birds as they trade back and forth along shore in search of food.

One of the most important things is to master

their call, that of either the plover or the yellow-leg is easy to imitate and once heard is never forgotten. The yellow-leg or yelper, as the baymen call him, has a loud, shrill whistle in one, two, three order, Whew- Whew- Whew. The plover has a plaintive call, sad, soft, but far reaching, Whew-e-Whew. They can often be called back a second time, even though several have previously been killed from the flock.

Bay birds as a rule, decoy readily, in fact, there is no other game as unsuspicious. I have seen an inexperienced gunner build a blind on the open beach as large as a house which one would expect to scare every bird away that came in sight of it, yet he would get excellent shooting as the little fellows tumbled into the stool, without paying any attention to him. On the other hand the experienced man will throw a few sticks together as an excuse for a blind, and by keeping quiet, have equally good sport.

One needs rubber hip boots for this work and as the good yellow-leg marsh is equally desirable to the mosquito a head net is often a blessing.: The gun ideal for it is a light handy twenty-bore, rather open in the right barrel and full choked in the left, for when they have been shot at a

lot, they sometimes afford long shots. The shells should be loaded with nines or tens in the right barrel and nines in the left.

Of an entirely different order is snipe shooting, though shot on salt marshes later in the season. The Wilson, or as it is commonly called, Jack-snipe, is also found in the uplands, along marshes and meadows and sometimes in cornfields. He is a sportsman of the first rank and will afford some of the sportiest shooting that one can find. The Jack snipe is never shot over decoys, except as incidental to other shooting, but is walked up. A good dog is helpful and generally speaking the pointer is the best, as a rule he is quieter. The dog, whatever the breed, must be well trained, for the ground is open which allows for fast work; yet he must cover it quietly, and the snipe gives out but little scent.

The principal factors in successful snipe shooting are, first, silence, second, to hunt down wind at all times, and third, quick shooting.

The snipe is undoubtedly more aroused by noise than any other game bird, and absolute silence must be observed to approach him. Though very nervous, and likely to flush out of range, "Jack" is really a very unsuspecting fel-

low, and will often light down fifty or a hundred yards from the gun after being missed. It is therefore always best to crouch and wait to see if he will circle after shooting at him. Yet the dog must learn to point at a considerable distance.

The gunner must always beat his ground down wind, as the bird will invariably rise into it when flushed, and if hoisted up wind, he will rise out of range very often and go straight away.

The writer knows that he is liable to much criticism for the advice to shoot quickly, as the snipe's flight is very erratic and he will criss cross, right and left, in short tacks of about twenty feet, for the first twenty or thirty yards of his flight before he straightens out on his course.

This has led to the popular error that he is difficult to bag. In reality, this is not so, at least in my opinion, for to me there is no bird so easy to grass as he. A fair shot should kill on sixty per cent of his shots, and a really good hand at it will get seventy per cent of them on an average day. If it is windy, they are always wild and lie poorly, which will make it harder, but there is no rush of wings to disconcert the gunner when he flushes, as there is in the case of partridge or grouse. Of course their zig zag flight is baffling

to the novice, or the slow puttering shot, but a little experience with the birds tends to teach the gunner when to expect a change in the course, and if the gun is brought up under him and snapped ahead while he is on one of his tacks, or is he is snapped just as he changes his course, he is easily grassed.

If the gunner is a slow shot, the bird must be allowed to straighten out, by which time it is probably thirty or forty yards off, and for such a man a full choke gun is necessary, as the vital parts of the bird are small and he can easily escape through an open pattern at that distance.

For the quick shot a light double barreled 12 gauge gun is the ideal weapon, loaded with three drams of powder and one ounce and one-eighth of No. 9 shot. Some prefer number tens as they give a closer pattern, but number tens cannot be depended on in windy weather, and if the birds are wild and flushing well ahead they are a bit too small. The nines or even eights will shoot close enough for the quick shot, and the slow shot is not liable to have great success with any size.

Generally speaking the vitality of the bird is low, and it only takes a few pillets to drop him.

Wonderful snipe shooting used to be had on the Hackensack meadows, and Jamaica Bay in sight of New York City. Some of Frank Forrester's stories devoted to snipe shooting in this vicinity are very interesting. Even a few years ago thirty or forty birds were often bagged at Flushing, L. I., nine miles from New York, by one gun in an afternoon.

Audubon says the snipe is never found in the woods, but with this I most emphatically disagree. Frequently when moose hunting in Nova Scotia, I have flushed snipe in virgin forests on damp wet ground, well back from the lake shores, yet I would never suggest hunting them in the woods, as in no other woods have I ever found them in thick coves of any size.

During the past season, while duck shooting on Back Bay, Virginia, on one occasion I left the battery early as the fowl were not flying, having in mind some good snipe marsh I had marked near the club. The place proved to be the ideal snipe grounds, a low marshy, fresh water meadow, of many hundreds of acres on which hogs and cattle were running, and had cut or rooted up the soil. Banked on one side by a dense growth of scrub alders, with little clumps

of them scattered here and there on the meadow, and the birds were on it in considerable numbers. I killed eight snipe and a king rail in less than an hour before sundown, and could probably have made a record bag had the wasted day in the battery been devoted to the "long bills," despite some most difficult shots at birds found in the alders which were out of sight almost as soon as they flushed.

Many of them brought down, would have been lost, had it not been for the little Springer spaniel which accompanied me.

It is for this reason that I so earnestly recommend a good dog when snipe shooting. The gunner will have little difficulty in flushing the birds, but despite the greatest care in marking them down, will lose many of those dropped, without a dog to retrieve them.

Snipe love to run around, in fact they are never still. They will not tolerate a marsh, however, otherwise desirable on which the growth of grass is too heavy for them to get through. It is consequently always advisable in the interest of the sport to burn your snipe marshes early in September. Nothing else will attract so many birds to it.

On warm quiet days, one will have much more success than when it is windy. It is well nigh impossible to do anything with them on a wild blustery day.

Light weight rubber hip boots are a necessity, but they must be light. Some prefer to wear shoes and leggings, disregarding the wet, and making a quick change on the return. Though I have frequently found this necessary in extremely warm weather, I must confess to a fondness for dry feet.

Wonderful snipe shooting is to be had in some of the Middle States, including Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, though unfortunately foolish politics has drained a great deal of the land available to them—land which is utterly worthless for agricultural pursuits now that it is drained.

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CHAPTER VII

Reed Birds and Rail

REED-BIRDS and Sora rail are usually gunned at the same time. During the latter part of August, they begin their southern migration, and when the season opens on September first, are usually found in goodly numbers on the wild oat marshes, along the Potomac and the other tributaries of the Chesapeake. I understand they also afford good shooting on the famous St. Clair flats, near Chicago and other western marshes but I have never shot them except on the East Coast. My early experience with this form of sport left me rather contemptuous of it.

Shooting in sweltering hot weather at little birds which my northern education had lead me to consider songsters (for the "Reedie" is the Bobolink of the north) which flew over in large flocks to be raked by a twelve-bore gun, or snapping at the rail which floundered up at the bow of one's boat and wabbled off on uncertain

wings, to drop back into the marsh thirty feet away, is not my idea of exhilarating sport.

But the past few years as the guest of a well known Baltimorian I shot for the two opening days on the famous Patuxant marshes, and learned that as in other forms of sport, constant pursuit has made these little chaps more wary, and though still the easiest form of bird shooting they are not nearly as easy as they used to be.

Floating down the river before daylight, in our narrow ponts, with a Negro pusher in the stern, we passed through banks of wild oats standing from eight to ten feet above the water. As the sun came up the reed bird flight started up the river towards higher ground and the bombardment began. They were in flocks of considerable numbers but came over well scattered so one could not depend upon a shot in the brown, but must pick his bird. And as they fly at high speed, about thirty or forty yards over the boat these little chaps provide a small mark indeed.

The Reedie flight being over, with twenty-eight in my boat, we started floating down the river to the lower marshes and waited for the tide to flood the oats so that the pont could be pushed through. It is quite a trick to preserve

one's balance in a jerkily moving pont—which is about three feet wide or less amidship—as the sweating darkey forces it through a dense growth, for when he reaches a thin spot the boat shoots ahead, under pressure from his pole, precipitating one into the water if not on guard. So one stands a-straddle of the forward seat, holding it betwixt the calf of the left leg and the shin of the right, gun in hand.

The rail got up about us in goodly numbers when we started in, sometimes we had three or four in the air at a time, and others railing at us as they ran off over the reeds, (hence their name). They flutter up with rapidly beating wings, legs a-trail, and foolishly flutter over the tops of the oats, yet despite their clumsy efforts they make fair speed. One that is new at the game is surprised to discover he is shooting *behind* most of those he is missing. They are indeed slow in flight, but their slowness is so apparent that one has great difficulty in realizing that lead is necessary.

Just as one swings on a bird with conviction that he will easily kill it, the giddy thing will suddenly drop straight back into the marsh and

the charge goes overhead, cutting down the oat tops.

One never can feel sure until he gets his balance and learns to take a half swing, half snap shot as soon as he can get on the mark with the muzzle of his gun.

Not the least of his work is in retrieving those brought down, and in this the Negro poler shows unerring skill.

In about two hours the tide ebbed, forcing us off the flats, we returned to the landing to find that I had my limit of fifty birds in the bottom of the boat, Black Sam having lost but two of those which I brought down. I am sure that I could not have found a dozen of them.

One seldom has any success in walking them up for they are fast runners and can scuttle over the reeds more rapidly than one could walk in such heavy going.

A twenty-bore gun is ideal for the purpose if open bored. When one uses a twelve-bore, which of course should not be much choked, 2¾ drams of powder and an ounce of tens is quite enough. Otherwise most of the birds will be badly shattered. The equipment might be any-

thing, except that I would suggest a large, soft silk handkerchief to bind tightly around the neck. One will invariably shoot in his shirt sleeves, and oats are disagreeable things to have constantly working down under the collar.

Despite the unusual conditions, with a little practice they become quite easy. A good shot, in my opinion, should bag fifty birds to a hundred shells or less, though many disagree with me.

CHAPTER VIII

Chicken Shooting

THE American prairie grouse, or chicken, as it is commonly called, has disappeared over a great deal of its former range. In the early Eighties splendid chicken shooting was had all through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa. During the Seventies and Eighties enormous bags were made by indiscriminate game hogs early in the season—a party of four guns, frequently filling a flat wagon with their birds in the course of one day's shooting. Today one has to go west of the Mississippi to find them in any numbers. They are still quite plentiful in some parts of Wisconsin and Minnesota, but the real chicken shooting in the States is on the great rolling plains of the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas.

Chickens are shot in the wheat stubbles and along the edge of low lying scrubby swails nearby; the prairie chicken lives only in the open. Due to the great open area, one must travel considerable distances in the course of the

day's hunt, so that the best method is to drive in a light spring wagon behind a fast team, or ride horseback, accompanied by a wide, ranging, speedy brace of pointers or setters. It is useless to hunt without dogs. When in the chicken country, the wagon will proceed slowly while the dogs cover the surrounding country. When they point, the gunners descend, load up and go forward for the shot. Usually the birds will lie well to the dogs, and when flushed, will get up intermittently, not in a covey as partridge do. Consequently, one should not move from his tracks before loading as a young chicken may be lying within a few steps of him.

They have great speed, but fly straight with a loud whirring noise when flushed, and after a few days practice, a fair shot should have no difficulty in killing three out of five. He should always mark the flight of the lost birds, for it will generally be possible to follow them up again. They will, late in the season, often fly great distances, so if found in fair quantities, it is better judgment to leave those flown and seek further for another covey. Late in the season they pack up in large numbers just as Scotch Grouse do. At this time there will invariably be some old cock

acting as sentry, and on the approach of the gunners they will flush wildly and go out of range.

Where they are shot at considerably, it is quite useless to use an open bore gun such as one would prefer for partridge. Generally speaking a long-barrel gun of 28 or 30 inches, of medium weight, half choked in the right barrel and full choked in the left, is the best, and for this purpose no more sporty weapon can be selected than a hard shooting twenty-bore, which will be handy to carry long distances, yet have all the necessary range and killing power, if bored full choke. Number 7 or 8 shot is the best early in the season; and 6 later.

The westerner unfortunately uses repeating and automatic guns almost exclusively, but one should be well satisfied with two shots to a rise. An idiscriminate man can play havoc with the young chickens early in the season, which flush close to the gun, when armed with a six shot repeater. The prairie chicken was at one time in serious danger of extermination, and though it will undoubtedly disappear over parts of the range where it now exists, it can I believe, be brought back to a great deal of its old range by careful preservation. The greatest danger to the

prairie chicken was done away with in the elimination of the market gunner and the establishment of the bag limit.

Large areas now devoted to grain raising, have benefited the birds so much that they have exended their range considerably to the North. The best prairie chicken shooting now, unquestionably is found in the great wheat growing districts of Manitoba and Alberta, where I have always promised myself a shoot for them.

Sharp-tail grouse shooting is quite similar, as, for that matter, is the killing of the huge sage hen found farther West in Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, and parts of Nevada. These birds weigh up to six or seven pounds apiece and make up in size for their comparative lack of plentifulness.

The Blue Mountain grouse of the western mountains is another splendid bird up to three pounds weight, but where I encountered them in the Alberta Rockies would not afford much sport, due to their tameness.

CHAPTER IX

Pass and Blind Duck Shooting

DUCK SHOOTING can be, broadly speaking, divided into three classes; blind shooting from point or marsh over decoys; pass shooting and battery shooting on open water. The latter is such a highly technical form of wild-fowling that we will take it up separately in the succeeding chapter. Ducks are also shot by jumping them from small ponds in marshland or by being poled through the marshes which are sufficiently submerged to permit the use of a narrow and shallow draught punt. But this latter form of wild-fowling is so restricted to certain localities that it will hardly need be given serious consideration. Aside from the ability to shoot accurately the most important point in wild-fowling as it is generally practiced, is the building of the blind and the setting of the decoys.

Generally speaking, in pass shooting neither is required, though blinds on permanent passes are sometimes built. Decoys are never used and

the blind in this instance is merely a concealment placed on a line with the birds natural flight.

Of all forms of shotgun shooting, I know of nothing that appeals to me so much as this. I have always looked upon pass shooting as the billiards of the scattergun game. Unfortunately it is also restricted to certain localities where the topographical conditions are correct.

In pass shooting one must depend upon the availibility of some ground over which birds fly in going from their feeding grouds to rest, or vice versa. Occasionally it is a bold promontory jutting out into some coastal bay or sound over which the birds fly on a short cut from one part of the water to another. Generally it is a narrow strip of land between two large lakes or marshes which the birds prefer for one purpose or another and consequently fly over the intervening neck in the early morning and again in the evening.

Nothing will tax the marksmanship of the sportsman so as picking high ducks out of the air when traveling at full speed on such a pass. Five or six ducks brought down under such conditions will afford the real sportsman more gratification than the legal limit of twenty-five secured under any other conditions. It calls for the most

powerful guns, due to the range at which most of the shots must be taken, when the birds have become used to being shot at. Generally speaking, I would recommend a long twelve-bore with 32 or 34 inch barrels (for long barrels promote accuracy) weighing about 8 pounds, shooting three inch shells, loaded with 3½ to 3¾ drams of powder and 1¼ ounces to 1⅜ of No. 4 shot.

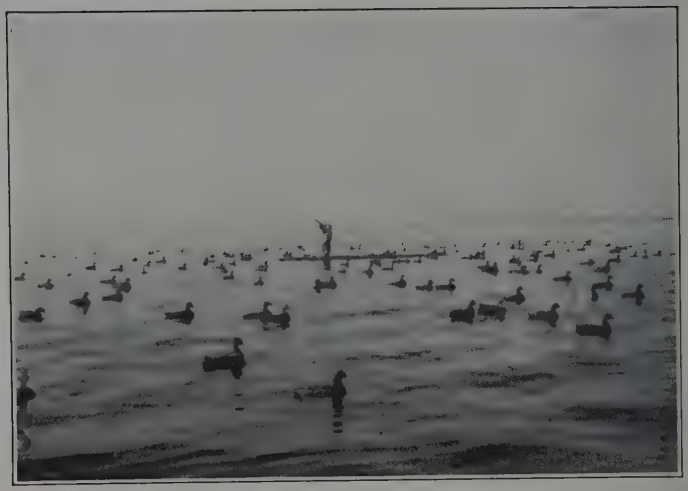
In other forms of shooting decoys are invariably used; in marsh shooting some sportsmen prefer a rig of live wild birds. There is no question but what they are the most attractive to the wild-fowl, not only in appearance but because of their activity, and which is more important their ability to call, and good decoys will usually call to their kind in the air. Their disadvantage being the difficulty of transporting them to and from the shooting ground and through constant attention required throughout the year. Generally speaking, equally satisfactory results are obtained by using wooden decoys to which are added a few wild callers.

All the great variety of wild-fowl can be divided broadly into two classes, namely diving ducks which inhabit deep water and marsh ducks which inhabit shallow water. Decoys are also

divided into two classes, the marsh ducks consisting mainly of teal, black duck, mallard, sprigtail and baldpates; the diving ducks, broad-bill or scaup, whistlers, red-head and canvas-back. When one is rigged with decoys of any one of these species he can of course, expect better shooting for that variety, though a mixed set of decoys, black duck and mallards, will prove generally successful for other marsh ducks. Likewise a mixed rig of broad-bill and red-heads for diving ducks, but it must be remembered that decoys of diving ducks cannot be successful for marsh shooting or vice versa, as they never mix.

In marsh shooting one usually builds the blind on some pond or creek and usually a small rig of a dozen decoys is much more attractive than a larger one. In point shooting, on open water for diving varieties of ducks or marsh ducks a larger rig should be used; generally about 30 or 40 decoys is the best, for here one is dependent to some extent upon the size of his rig to attract the passing birds, and ducks naturally collect in larger flocks on open water than they do in the marshes. The decoys should always be set with a view to their prominence to passing birds; the location of the blind, and the wind. All birds

In the switch willows—at the greatest duck-shooting club in the world—Woponaca, Tennessee—coming in with the limit of Mallards before noon



A Currituck battery

The South Hero monstrosity

light into the wind, never down wind. Consequently the decoys should be anchored windward of the blind. This compels the attracted fowl to circle into the wind and come up toward the blind to light, bringing them much closer to the gun, whereas if the decoys are anchored downwind, the birds circling below them, when coming up to light, will be much farther away. Usually the outside decoys should be about thirty yards from the blind, the nearest about twenty from it. They should be strung out across the front with the majority or two-thirds of them towards the wind, and a few scattered "stringers" strung out downwind to lead the birds up. Calling does not play an important part in shooting diving ducks, tho some guides, being adept at it, can add considerably to one's sport by their ability to imitate red-heads, canvas-backs and broad-bills. The novice does better not to attempt it, but in marsh shooting calling is most important, for mallards and black duck are garrulous to a degree. There are a great many varieties of artificial calls, but nothing so good for the average sportsman as an energetic duck of the species. Usually if one has two or three pairs of live callers, it is best to anchor out one or two of them and keep the rest

penned up in the blind which encourages them to talk to each other; after all the blind is the most important thing.

Along the Mississippi Valley the wild-fowlers frequently make their own calls and get as high as $25.00 for a good one, which is well worth it to the man who has acquired the art of using it.

So adept in their use are the seasoned old fowlers that live callers would only be a bothersome handicap to them. Actually, they can outcall the ducks—so much so that they quite frequently depend entirely too much upon the call to the neglect of decoys. As a result they will lure fowl in to their place of concealment which will circle repeatedly and then make off, which would promptly decoy if they saw any stools to come to.

I have shot ducks from Nova Scotia to Mexico, and I have always contended that if I could find a duck shooter with the calling skill of the Missisippian and the decoy laying ability of the Atlantic Coast gunner, I would have the world's champion.

Building a blind is in itself a very simple operation—like rowing a boat or making an omelette —anyone can do it after a fashion. The expert is distinguished by his skill, the ease and certainty

with which the results are accomplished. The greatest mistake is in overdoing it and of this we will speak more later on.

Blinds may be largely divided into two classes —floating and the stationary variety, which are by far the commonest. The former is used upon open water, the latter usually from terra firma —on a point or in a marsh—though in some sections stationary blinds are set out in open water quite a way from shore as we shall explain.

The commonest form of floating blind seen on our southern coastal waters, particularly Currituck and Pamlico Sounds, is generally constructed by taking three small cypress trees of from four to five inches in diameter and securely lashing them together in the form of a long narrow letter "U"—the two parallel sides being of sufficient length to over-reach the usual skiff (about 12 feet in length) the open end being of such width as to allow the boat to be run in bow first between them. In other words, the contraption when laid on the water, will have an area of about 4-½ ft. by 14 ft. An anchor and rope is attached to the closed end and holes are bored about a foot apart through all three logs from top to bottom—these being made with a one inch

auger so that they will take without trouble the small cedar bushes which are jammed into them in an upright position.

The frame can then be lifted up on to a small motor boat with a plentiful supply of cedar boughs for the screen, while the skiff full of decoys is towed astern. One then is at liberty to go anywhere in search of the fowl. When a likely place is found where birds are feeding, one of course, trys to anchor on the exact spot from which they are driven. The anchor on the frame is dropped—the decoys thrown out around it. One only has to stick the bushes in the frame, take the motor boat well away leeward or hide it in a likely cove, row the skiff back to the blind, and run it up inside and sit down to await results. I have often killed my limit out of such a blind on Currituck, but doubt their usefulness where birds are harassed as they are in some localities more thickly settled.

Similar stationary blinds are built on shallow flats by simply driving the sharpened ends of cedar bushes down in the form of a "U" in which the skiff is tied—the gunner usually having several of these at different places so that he can shoot from the most likely one with regards to the

wind and flight of the fowl—the disadvantage being that he is still limited as to operation. The only thing I dislike about the boat blind is that it is most difficult to shoot well from a wildly tossing skiff on a windy day.

A much more durable and comfortable blind is that used on the Chesapeake and Northern New York lakes consisting of a platform set up on piles driven solidly into the bottom about one hundred yards from shore (which is as far out as the law allows). The sides are built up with boards waist high — a bench to sit on running across the back—the whole floor area being about 3′ 6″ x 6′ or sufficient for three men to shoot comfortably from. The floor is usually about two feet above the water at high tide to protect one from the waves and to allow the skiff to be run up close under it in the screened passage made for it in the rear, the whole affair being covered with the indispensable cedar trees. Sometimes they are provided with a canvas hood to be pulled up over the seat in wet weather. On an extremely low tide they appear most grotesque, standing up six or seven feet out of the water. Nevertheless, I have assisted to kill some big bags from one on the Choptank River.

But comfortable as they are, I have never seen any blinds so luxurious as those used on Lake Champlain as shown in the illustration. This is a veritable house built up on piles with a front porch having a shooting platform upon which the gunners jump up to fire over the tall cedars. Under the shooting platform is a cage for the decoys; inside in an area usually 7 feet x 10 feet with a seven foot ceiling are—item, two double bunks, one above the other, three camp chairs, one cook stove, one table with cupboard, gun racks, etc. In this delightful family atmosphere I lived for three days with the Game Commissioner of Vermont, Lt. Col. H. P. Sheldon, now Chief Federal Game Warden of the U. S. at South Hero, eating, sleeping, swapping lies and shooting ducks all under one roof—and right good shooting we had of it too!—at the wariest of birds, black mallards; though why in the name of duck sense they ever allowed themselves to be lured into shooting range of such a monstrosity sitting out on the shore of the lake with a broad yellow marsh in back of it, and not an evergreen within a mile to harmonize with those with which the blind was covered, is more than I can say. The illustration speaks for itself.

On the Chesapeake the large bush blinds are usually baited with corn to lure the broad-bill in. Yet, no such graft was flaunted under their bills at South Hero. Such shooting flatters one's marksmanship. The Commissioner had never seen me shoot before, though he has since, and he thought I was good, but when one is standing on his feet on a smooth floor ready to shoot, gun to shoulder, he should not miss more than one in six or eight that came in over the decoys.

What a contrast this was to Barnegat where one is not allowed to build a blind in the water or shoot from a battery. There one usually lies in the cockpit of a shallow duck boat or "sneak" box held to the bank by a meadow stick and covered over with marsh grass to harmonize with the surroundings.

Another method of using the skiff as a blind in marsh shooting is to fasten lathes to the side about half an inch from the gunnels and stick marsh grass up in it to the height of a couple of feet. Sometimes the grass is sewed together with heavy twine like a skirt and fastened to the boat on hooks in the gunnels, the whole thing being rolled up and stored away in the stern when one starts for home.

Box blinds of boarding to protect one from the wind with a comfortable seat inside are often set up on a point and the sides thatched with marsh grass to harmonize with the surroundings—these being usually large enough for three guns and where the thatch grows high and is thick down to the shore edge, they are quite unnoticeable. There are a host of variations, each having its good and bad points and adapted to the local conditions, yet, generally erring on the side of comfort for the user instead of being built entirely with regards to efficiency as a blind. For every good one that one will see, twenty poor ones will be encountered. The best blind is the least possible which will conceal one from the birds—if he will only control himself and keep still when they are coming into the decoys.

The fowl are not watching for you. They are looking for company, feed, or a place to rest. They see your decoys and are deceived. They want to come or they would not swing to you. Perhaps they have been shot at a lot and are wary and swing over two or three times—but what attracts them is the decoys—not a pretty blind.

If you are properly garbed so that you fade

into your surroundings and avoid all movements, particularly the temptation to look up at them overhead where the light glistens on your face, they will often come in when you are very slightly covered. While at South Hero I killed two singles one morning that came into the decoys while the guide was out in them picking up a previously killed bird. He merely crouched down as low as a foot of water would allow and kept still. How often do you see a rabbit in an open field before he bolts from his form? How often do you see a covey of partridge in a stubble before you? They are not covered up in a blind but they *keep quiet.*

One day last fall, while in Vermont, I found a likely creek up and down which black duck were trading. Getting out on the edge of the water, I cut two good size willow trees about six feet tall and sticking them in the soft ground stood between them. In a couple of hours, I shot six ducks—all easy overhead incoming shots. The willows did not completely conceal me — the ducks could look right through them, but I kept still and the willows looked just like a thousand others which lined the banks. This is the secret, if there is one, of a good blind. Make it of what-

ever is natural around it and don't overdo it. If you are on a rocky promontory after sea ducks —make a screen of rocks. Would not willows be conspicuous there? If there is an icy shore, build it of ice slabs, edge up, but rough and sketchy. Don't make a wall. If there is snow on the ground, cover yourself with a white sheet and let the blind go to blazes. If you have a broad bare shore to contend with, you will have to dig a pit as they do for geese and ducks on the Mississippi or the wheat fields of Dakota and lie in it—only if your locality is in tidal waters, you have to build a waterproof box about fourteen inches deep and two feet wide by six feet long to lie in and sink it, fastening it down with piles driven in deep at the four ends so the water won't lift it out—and while at it, you had better make a tight cover for the top to keep out rain and snow, when not in use. Many a goose I have killed on the bare sand bars of Shinnecock in such a rig. Bare ground is after all the most successful place for a blind because it appears to both birds and man to be the least likely to afford concealment. In some parts of Virginia they sink tubs or oil barrels in the mud flats.

The grass blind in the marsh or in the edge of it should never be higher than the surrounding sedge. If so, it is quite as conspicuous as if made of a foreign foliage and in collection of your material go well away from your point else you will make your hide conspicuous by the absence of cover around it. By the same token, if the blind is permanent don't walk around it and beat down the thatch, always approach it in the same direction so as to make only a little path.

Where possible, the cedar blind would be avoided in my opinion—it does hide one, no doubt of that, but how conspicuous it is—like a wart on one's nose. The best which can be said for them no matter how small and well made, is that they are a suspicious looking concealment from which we often kill ducks, where we could not kill them without any. As for the large South Hero blinds described, one can only say that we sometimes kill ducks despite them rather than because of them. How much easier it would be to lure birds into range of a skiff pulled up in the marsh in back of the blinds. The answer is, local laws often do not permit it, which is good for the ducks.

Wild-fowl are used to seeing rocks and islets sticking up in lakes and ponds where they come from in the north. I have a pet idea that if I had a place of my own along shore, which I shot consistently, that I would sink sand bags or rocks to build up a small island if only ten feet in diameter, with a box in the center and plant a bit of marsh grass here and there, between the rocks above high water. While more laborious than a wooden blind to construct, it would not be very difficult in shallow water, say from one to three feet deep and would be infinitely more durable and less conspicuous. Were I a duck, every inoffensive cedar bush I saw would scare the daylight out of me. I have known clubs that shot consistently from one spot to build concrete blinds in deep water, which were thatched with marsh grass on the sides. Surely a rock and sedge blind would be less expensive.

No matter what the blind may be, if placed on advantageous promontory or point, as is generally the case, ducks will learn to steer well out from it if it is used often. The secret of killing ducks where one has to put up with a permanent blind is to wait for a good day when conditions are right and shoot it hard, then give it a rest for

a week or more—but short seasons and the demands of many hunters together with restricted shooting no longer permit this in most localities. The days when we could roam about and hastily set up a blind out of handy material where we chose are rapidly passing.

CHAPTER X

Battery Shooting for Ducks

OF duck shooting in its various forms, battery shooting, while it is conceded to bring the best results is usually also acknowledged to be the most difficult. We speak of course of the skill demanded of the shooter, taking for granted the enormous labor of setting down a battery with its attending two hundred odd decoys and the sloop or motorboat standing by.

Personally, I believe it is largely a matter of what one is used to. For instance,I have done a lot of battery shooting, more in fact, than any other phase of wild-fowling, and to me it is the easiest. Nevertheless, to the shooter, be he tyro or expert who has never tried it before, battery shooting is a difficult and most exasperating experience. Nor is it to be learned in a day or even a month for that matter. It takes years to make a finished battery shooter, and by finished, we mean one who will accept every one of his shots from any point of the compass and account

for four out of five birds within forty yards. Few men can do this, yet it has been my pleasure to shoot with one or two who did better, impossible as it may seem. The average fair shot will get onto it in a week or so of steady shooting, and kill about as well as he is capable of, but he will not take every opportunity afforded, much less kill nearly as often, and this is the difference which makes for a score of a dozen birds at the end of a fair day in which the really good shot will kill his limit.

Battery shooting is hard, but it does not tax the marksmanship as much in my opinion, as taking high ducks over a pass or even from a point where most of the shots are long, yet I know most duck hunters will disagree with me and claim that of the three, point shooting is easier. Battery shooting entails more skilful handling of oneself, but as most of the birds shot at are decoying and within thirty yards or less when shot, they are to me easier than either point or pass, while floating blind shooting is easier where it can be resorted to successfully, and jumping ducks while being shoved through a marsh, the easiest of all.

Batteries may be divided into two main classes,

double lie-down boxes about eighteen inches deep, in which two gunners lie side by side, and sink boxes in which the lone shooter sits up and which are in consequence much deeper. Occasionally double sit-up boxes are made, of which the finest I have seen belongs to my friend, E. Bartlett Hayward, on Back Bay, and aside from this particular rig, which is the only roomy double sit-up box I ever saw, I prefer the lie-down type.

Unless the battery is exceedingly large, the sit-up type is far harder to shoot from than the coffin box, also it is human to desire companionship in misery and the duck shooter must expect lots of it. I know nothing more dreary than to lie alone, cramped up, cold, wet and shivering, on a bleak, rainy day when the birds are not moving, with no one to talk to.

Next to knowing how to shoot fairly straight, the most important thing is to keep down out of sight and avoid all movement whatsoever when the birds are approaching. Some men cannot realize the importance of this, or are so constituted they cannot lie still—some of the best shots I know are so afflicted, and forever sitting up to light a cigarette, stretch or look around, and damn the luck, when as usual they do so at the

wrong time and flare the birds. Usually they say one can't stay down all the time, but it can be done and the successful shooter is the one who treats it seriously.

Last year I shot with an experienced sportsman who used the battery the first day and though an excellent shot killed only three birds,—while tied in the same spot the next day I killed sixteen. The guide complained that he would not keep low enough in the box to keep his head from sight and the birds would not go to him. Yet this same shooter complained that my hat, which I had used battery shooting ten years, was too noticeable and would scare the birds. Clothing is important, but one dressed in a red vest and a derby hat will kill more birds than the restless fellow, carefully garbed, who cannot keep still. The proper clothing for the battery in cold weather is a pair of felt boots, heavy flannel underwear, a thick pair of wool trousers, preferably gray, with a windproof sheepskin vest, or a thick gray sweater and gray cap. Gray is the proper color to harmonize with the battery, which is invariably a watery gray tone. Nothing is worse than tan canvas pants and shooting coat which is out of harmony with everything around it—such

a color is intended for the point or marsh. To the outfit is added a pair of oilskin overalls and jacket for windy days when the spray is flying, and in the rain. It is sometimes impossible to keep warm, despite the clothing, but I have lain in a battery in December and January, in severe weather, when properly covered. One of the old carriage foot-warmers full of charcoal is indispensable for the feet in such weather as are a soft cap to pull over the ears and a loose pair of mitts which can easily be pulled off to shoot. I have yet to see the warm glove which I could shoot with. Usually I keep the right hand uncovered under the left armpit for warmth, and thus have no glove to remove in an emergency. Hip boots are unnecessary, for there is no wading to be done. They are cold despite all the socks one can wear, while the felt variety are a comfort. The chief trouble is that a lot of clothes make it impossible to shoot well and any kind of a coat should be avoided. For this reason, when too cold or wet for a vest, I would suggest a North Sea Navy suit, which consists of a baggy pair of waterproof gray canvas pants with a drawing string at the waist, and a heavy wool Parka, over which a waterproof canvas Parka is worn. This

has a hood for the head with draw-strings at the wrists, waist and neck. It is loose, warm, waterproof, and the easiest thing imaginable in which to shoot.

Thus equipped, one lies back flat in the battery with his head resting on a thin pillow just raised enough to carry his eyes above the coaming of the box. If he can see the water he is too high and his head is noticeably projecting above the flat surface of the deck and fenders which accentuate it. It is unnecessary to see the water for any bird flying in will at least be a foot above it. If one can just glimpse the tops of the heads of the nearest decoys he is about right.

The gun should be grasped with the right hand, while the left is free to hold to the coaming of the box and pull one up to a sitting position to shoot. The muzzle of the gun should rest on the edge of the coaming at the foot, so that if accidentally discharged, no harm is done. On no account should the muzzle of the gun ever come inside the box; the battery being weighted down to the level of the water takes very little to sink it, and when the foot board is blown out it is a ticklish position with the sloop half a mile away to windward at anchor. One man of my acquain-

tance was killed by a carelessly discharged gun in a battery. It is well to remember that if a board is not shattered by an accidental discharge, the range being so close that the hole is not larger than the bore of the gun, and can therefore be temporarily plugged with an empty shell. Being so easy to sink, the battery is invariably provided with a skirt of sheet lead that is hammered down flat about the edge of the box. When the water is slopping in on a wet day the outer edge of this lead is raised, slanting toward the water, and by pulling them toward you the box is slightly raised, thereby assisting to keep out the slop of the sea.

These things should be done gradually, for the best shooting is to be had on rough days when the birds are restless, and the higher the box is the more noticeable it is to them. A careful guide always provides a bailer, and if necessary uses it frequently. Keep the water down in the bottom; never let it get the best of you, and if bailing fails, or a squall comes up before the tender can take you off, remember above all else these two things: reach out with a gun if necessary and draw a couple of the decoys to you, tie some of the iron deck decoys to the wooden de-

coys' anchor rope and cast them overboard. Don't do this without fastening them to a wooden decoy which will act as a buoy, so they can be recovered, for they are expensive and guides are usually poor. That is number one. Your battery is anchored off the rear fender at your head end of the box; there is also an anchor at the foot of the box to hold the battery straight and keep it from swinging about in the decoys. Pull this foot anchor up so that your head will swing about in the wind. Your long rear flexible fender will then keep out more water. If all this fails, stand up on deck, with your companion, straddling the box, and by grasping each other's shoulders with outstretched arms steady each other. The box will sink slowly if swamped and is usually set in shallow water where birds can feed. By standing thus on the deck, one's head will usually be above water when the battery hits the bottom. I have never yet been swamped, though only prompt action has saved me twice; but take this game seriously at all times. Battery shooting is dangerous.

To get back to the shooting, of which we have talked the least. Aside from the cramped position, the greatest difficulty the beginner has to

contend with at first is gauging distance. Due to the necessity of keeping low, so that the water cannot be seen, approaching birds always appear to be suspended in air with nothing above or below them, and birds coming to the box are thought to be much nearer than they actually are. I have frequently seen a good shot, but inexperienced batteryman, raise on birds a hundred and fifty yards from him, not realizing until he sat up that they were out of range. The water is always deceiving in this respect, but being hull down in the battery accentuates it. When one can see the birds' eyes it is time enough to rise. Better yet, let them hover or flare up over the decoys before you get up. Despite the speed of the birds, one has time enough always; the difficulty is to restrain the impulse to raise up too quickly and let off both barrels without proper aim. I never really learned to shoot from a battery in proper time and style until I began going regularly with a somewhat old sportsman whom I allowed to take the first shot. After he was through with both barrels I would sit up quickly but methodically, get my balance and shoot at the remaining birds going away.

From then on I learned to kill my birds with consistency, and on one trip to the bay killed forty-eight birds out of fifty-four chances. I do not mean that I was killing forty-eight birds to fifty-four shells, far from it. By a chance, I mean every time I rose up in the box to shoot, sometimes it was at one bird or it might have been five or six, and on occasion more. Sometimes I killed a pair, more often one bird, a lucky shot might have brought down three. The point is that on fifty-four occasions I sat up and shot at ducks and had forty-eight birds to show for it. I try to make this clear, as professional baymen with whom I have gunned consider me a fair shot. Yet if shells were counted against the birds the showing would not seem good.

A couple of double misses pull down the score a lot, and one must often use three or four shells to kill a cripple on the water which is swimming off. This should always be done instantly. In the first place it is good sportsmanship to get the cripples out of misery. Few of them recover, while most of them fall prey to gulls, hawks or the ice which starves them out later. The tender will not get all of them for you. Kill the cripples

so that they can gather them in to fill your bag. Of course a good guide on the job will shoot a lot of them over, but some will surely escape unless you do your part. In shooting them it is best to stand up, aim a little under the mark so the glancing shot will strike the head and neck. Most of the bird's vitals are protected under water, which is why cripples are hard to dispatch.

Returning for a moment to the matter of scores, I have questioned reliable guides from Maine to Currituck and they all concede that the amateur sport who shoots only a couple of weeks per season is doing well if he gets his limit of twenty-five birds with one hundred shells, including all his shots at cripples, etc. If he bags one duck to three shells including cripples, he is a good shot. I once killed fifty-five red-heads with one hundred and eighteen shells, including six at one cripple canvas-back, but conditions were ideal. So do not be ashamed of your expenditure of ammunition, it is to be expected; and never go out with less than one hundred in the waterproof box you should have for the purpose. Speaking of shells, I would recommend No. 6 shot for general battery shooting at blue-bills, red-head and

canvas-back. Small shot is not effective on salt water and large ducks, but Nos. 4 and 5 are not needed here, as they are on the point or pass to pull down the high and wide ones.

Practice raising up and shooting from the sitting position at home and get used to it. Lie on the floor and aim at the pictures—particularly practise on incomers from the right side; as these are the hardest test of skill. Some men prefer to go all the way around to the left, shooting over the left shoulder at such a bird, but this is slower. In a lay-down box it is better to throw the right leg out of the box and spin the body around on the buttocks as in a wheel chair. This takes practice. Severe left-hand birds are usually shot under and behind due to the cramped position; therefore, in aiming, try to remember to raise the gun and hold high. Though this was my hardest shot also, I now prefer the right-hand side of a double battery (usually considered the least desirable), for I have learned to get in front of these hard right-hand birds and can also swing to the left and shoot behind my partner on his side, thereby getting more chances. Never try to get on your knees to shoot; the position is slow

to get to from the prone, and dangerous with a partner beside you. A good trick to know is to toll birds with the foot. Many a flock trading close by to the water does not see your decoys. Raise your leg and kick once or twice, this will attract them, but do not overdo it.

The minute the flock bounces up a few feet, they have seen your signal and rising to find out what it is, see your decoys. If they don't want to come they won't. If you kick again after they see you it will scare them off. Of course it is idle to toll high birds, they see you anyway.

In summing up this advice, which I trust will assist some beginners in the grandest sport I know, I would say that the cardinal points are: above all else keep down low in the box, and being down, keep still; if you must stretch or wiggle don't sit up like a fretful child. If you want to light your pipe, do it lying down—you can if you try. When birds come near to you, let them come as near as they will and then don't get excited and flounder up in haste and try to shoot off balance; the quieter your movements the more speed you will eventually attain. Aim at a bird, one that you picked out for the purpose, every time you shoot. If you have not learned

these things you never can be a good man in a battery. I have a friend who has, and I know that he knows I have—that is why we would rather have one day together in a double box than three with anyone else.

CHAPTER XI

Goose Shooting

GOOSE shooting in all the essential details, is similar to duck shooting, in fact the two are so closely allied that one frequently while duck shooting kills geese, and almost invariably, when shooting geese, kills ducks. The conditions under which they are hunted are almost the same, and consequently all that has been said in the past two chapters on duck shooting is equally true of geese, except that one might say that goose shooting is a post graduate course of wild-fowling.

The geese are infinitely more cautious than the ducks, and therefore it takes greater skill to decoy them. When one adds to this that they are very much fewer in numbers, and a larger, tougher bird, which is harder to knock down, he will realize that he has a more difficult problem to contend with.

The usual method of goose shooting, particularly on salt water and the Eastern lakes is to set the rig on some prominent sand bar in their

line of flight. A hole is usually dug for the blind around which are scattered a few rushes. A conspicuous blind is fatal, the decoys usually consisting of a dozen or more wild geese, staked out independent of each other in front of the blind, flanked by a couple of dozen wooden decoys. A great deal depends upon the industry of the captive birds in calling their brothers from the air. A good honker, as it is called by the baymen, is a valuable asset, upon which most of one's success depends. He is usually a great pet, and shown every care and attention by his master. Immediately he sees a gaggle of geese in the air he will start honking and flapping his wings to attract their attention. Sometimes they will circle many times out of range before deciding to set their wings and come in and unfortunately, they will more often but come near enough to inspect the rig and wisely go on about their business.

It is a superb sight to see sixty or more of these mighty birds come into the decoys and light, as I have on a few occasions, and what a racket there is, between the honking of the decoys and the guide, and the answering of the wild ones. It is not difficult to learn to imitate the call of the wild goose and many wild-fowlers become adept

at it, though I find success is more often attained when calling singles or pairs and seldom with large flocks.

A shoal or sandy spot is the best place for the rig, as the migrating birds prefer to rest where they can stand and preen themselves after a long flight, and also get gravel, which is so necessary for them to digest their food.

On Back Bay, Virginia, I have also bagged geese from a battery in deep water, just as ducks are shot, except that the live decoys and about twenty or thirty wooden ones are substituted for the greater number of duck decoys usually set out. Sometimes they can be shot from the battery with great success. I believe one day we killed nine from the box, though I have participated in larger bags point shooting.

On the great plains of the Dakotas and other western points geese are shot on their Southern flight in the grain fields, the usual method being to drive about the country until a large number are discovered feeding in some field. They will fly to this favored spot in the early morning to feed, usually retiring to some nearby lake where they can rest in peace during the day, out of range from shore, flying back again in the eve-

Black Duck on Shinnecock Bay, Long Island. Though only about eighty miles from New York, we killed our limit for four consecutive days in this blind in 1926

A GOOSE-PIT ON THE MISSISSIPPI

A BIG CURRITUCK GANDER

ning to feed in the wheat. When the gunner locates a lot of feeding geese he repairs to the field before daylight, hastily digging a shallow pit in which to lie, carefully scattering the dirt over a large area around him so that it will not be conspicuous, and sets up a dozen silhouette or shadow decoys about him. These decoys are cut out of sheet iron and consequently when folded up, can easily be carried. Great bags of geese are still made in this way. The wild goose because of his wariness is apparently holding his own and has not appreciably diminished in numbers during my time.

Due to their size and slow wing-beat, geese do not appear to be fast, but in reality they do develop great speed, flying upward to ninety miles an hour. The beginner invariably makes the mistake of not leading them sufficiently and also of underestimating their range. It is not at all unusual for the novice to shoot at geese one hundred or one hundred and twenty-five yards away, whereas the stoutest 12 bore full choke fowling-piece of about eight pounds weight, loaded with $3\frac{1}{2}$ drams of smokeless and $1\frac{3}{8}$ ounce of No. 2 shot, cannot be depended upon to kill them over seventy measured yards.

It is best to make a rule of letting them come on as long as they will before sitting up to shoot. Some people prefer B. B. shot. It is true that these larger pillets will kill farther when they hit, but due to their size they give a very thin pattern, through which a bird may escape. Number 2 shot will maintain a killing pattern quite as far as the twelve-bore is capable of consistently dropping geese.

It is the shot which strikes the head, neck and wings that brings down the most birds at long range, where the pillets have not the velocity and penetration to reach the vital parts of the body.

To illustrate this point, a few years ago I was shooting Jack-snipes on Currituck Sound, armed with a modified choke 12 bore, loaded with No. 8 shot. As I walked toward the point concealed by the tall rushes a single goose jumped up with a loud honk from where it was scratching gravel; without thinking I fired. To my astonishment, the goose dropped stone dead. I carefully paced the distance to where the bird fell, which was forty-five yards. Plucking the goose, I found numerous shot marks on the body that were quite ineffective, but eight or nine wounds in the neck and head which undoubtedly did the business. I

do not approve of using small shot on geese. 2's or 1's are quite heavy enough. If one wants larger pillets he should sensibly adopt a larger bore which will shoot a heavier charge of them and consequently make a dense pattern as the 2's will in a 12 bore.

CHAPTER XII

Turkey Shooting

OF all our game birds the wild turkey is surely the wildest, and the sportsman who bags a sly old gobbler unassisted is eligible to the thirty-second degree of the order of skilled hunters, for he has demonstrated his ability beyond the question of doubt.

He must be a tracker of the first order, versed in the ways of the woods, able to stalk his game with the stealth of a Red Indian, and the patience of a wooden one, quick and accurate with both eye and rifle and brain. Also he must be able to talk turkey as the turkeys talk it. These are the generally accepted qualifications.

Personally I never cared much for this sport, though it has its enthusiasts. It is slow work at the best, the shots are entirely too far between. I would much prefer to shoot grouse or woodcock which are found in much the same country, over a good dog. One can then fire twenty or thirty shots a day, without the restraint, imposed

by creeping through the woods like a shadow.

Generally speaking, turkeys are hunted in two ways, namely still-hunting or calling, though the two are more often combined. There are other methods, not sanctioned by good sportsmen, such as finding where they are roosting and potting them out of the trees by moonlight. Still-hunting is probably the least satisfactory, as to results, though it calls for the highest degree of skill. There are only a few places left in remote corners of the South and West, where they are still plentiful enough to make it pay unless one is assisted by a tracking snow. When a turkey or a band of them is flushed, the hunter marks the direction of their flight, and rapidly follows them up, when he thinks he has gone far enough he casts first to one side of his trail and then to the other and when they are again raised continues the pursuit in the same manner. Eventually if they are not lost entirely, some of them are apt to lay up and give a close shot as they jump from some thick cover on his approach.

The speed with which these large birds, sometimes weighing up to twenty-eight pounds and over, can get away has got to be witnessed to be appreciated. They are some times hunted in the

same manner with bird dogs, which is of course much easier, though they seldom at this late day, lay to the point. The dogs however can follow them faster, and each succeeding flight is usually shorter than the preceding one. Nevertheless one will often follow them miles before getting a shot, particularly when following afoot on bare ground without a dog.

The commonest method of pursuit, is to start still-hunting, and when signs are found of turkey using in the vicinity, or if a band is flushed, to follow a short way, and construct a light blind from which to try and call them. After they are scattered, like partridge they will call to each other to assemble the flock, and if the caller is skillful he may bring some of them to him.

There are several kinds of artificial calls, the commonest made from the wing bone of a turkey. This simple reed-like instrument is cupped in the hands, one end of it held in the lips and by sharply sucking on it the yelp of the turkey is imitated. Much the same noise can be reproduced upon a pipe stem, but to fool the bird one has to be an adept indeed.

When convinced that the deception is real, they will generally answer and cautiously work their

way towards the blind, answering intermittently as they stop to listen and watch.

But the slightest sound from the blind which is unnatural, or a movement, will send them scuttling away for good. Young birds will sometimes fly to the call, but a wise old one which has been fooled before, will come afoot, and may take a couple of hours to traverse a few hundred yards.

Nothing which I know of requires the patience as well as the skill of calling turkey, for to try and force the issue is fatal. I remember one humorous incident in turkey shooting in West Virginia which affords a typical illustration.

Usually they are found in swampy thickets, but in the fall of the year they go to the ridges to search for beechnuts and acorns. It was there we ran into a brood in the hard woods, and they flew across a deep valley to another mountain, where we soon heard them calling. After a hard stalk we reached the spot; and my companion, a skillful caller, sat down, got out his wing bone, and proceeded. Soon a turkey answered—Jim pleaded—turkey replied coyly, and so the conversation continued at intervals. Finally Jim got impatient and decided to try and stalk it through

the thick cover. He would call, then crawl a ways and call again; meanwhile the turkey continued to answer. When he was sure he was near the bird, Yelp! said the turkey, and Jim made the fatal mistake of calling too often. Sooner or later you are sure to get the pronunciation wrong, and when you do, Mr. Turkey leaves. This is the first rule in turkey calling. But Jim cupped the bone in his hands. Yelp! Yelp! Quelp!!—Ah, Hell! He grabbed his gun as the last high falsetto squeak resounded through the woodlands, and the turkey lit out from over our heads—almost. Tumbled end-over-end at the report with a tipped wing, and ran off with Jim after him in a race that would have surely made the Grand National look like an eleven-dollar funeral procession; but we walked home without our turkey.

Which reminds me that large shot are required for these birds. If I were to hunt entirely by calling from a blind I should prefer to use a rifle of medium power, such as a .32-20 which would not blow them to pieces, yet would afford one the opportunity of killing many out of range of the shotgun. But many of the shots will be on the wing, where one will have trouble enough on his

hands to knock them down with a scatter gun. A twelve-bore of medium weight, full choke bored, loaded with three and a half drams of smokeless and an ounce and a quarter of No. 2 shot is about right.

Despite this advice, I had the best luck I ever experienced, coming home late in the afternoon, when I had given up all hope of turkey, so knowing there was a covey of partridge in or near the slashing I was about to cross, I changed my shells and slipped a couple of loads of three drams and an ounce of eights into my gun. No sooner done, than I walked right into a large band of young turkeys dusting, and killed a right and left with my light loads, and another nearby with a third shot. The walk home that night across some steep ridges was a labor indeed.

Turkey, I am glad to say, appear to be no longer in danger of extermination, due to good laws for their protection and their increased wariness over that which they showed in our forefathers' time. It has also been definitely demonstrated that they can be successfully reared upon the large private preserve.

CHAPTER XIII

Crow Shooting

ROOK shooting has been a popular sport in England for generations, but few sportsmen in America seem to realize the fun to be had in crow hunting. It is not only excellent practice out of season, but the crow shooter will be welcomed with open arms by every farmer in the community and will also do a great deal for game preservation, for the crow is a great thief and takes keen delight in robbing other birds' nests of the eggs and young nestlings, which it eats.

As a boy the writer was passionately fond of shooting and all through the spring and summer would wander around with his gun in quest of hawks and crows when the opportunity afforded. Naturally, he learned a lot about their habits that a more casual observer would ignore.

Some favor the small-bore rifle with a telescope sight, but it is far too risky in a settled district such as that in which we usually hunt crows, and only ground shots can be taken with safety.

Your game is usually perched on the limb of an old dead tree which commands almost every approach and it takes a good deal of skill and patience to stalk it close enough for a shot with the rifle.

To my mind this is not as much fun as shooting with a shotgun, crow call and decoys. By bringing your game to you one can always secure more shots than by trying to approach it. My favorite stunt as a boy was to locate myself behind a hedge about sundown and get them as they came over on their way to their roosting place from the shore where they feed.

There was one favorite spot where I used to go on cold winter afternoons when the wind was blowing a gale, (the wind was a great help, for then they would fly low and the report of the gun would not carry far to warn off the rest). One day standing there with another boy, twenty-five crows were killed in a couple of hours. They came over about thirty yards high and I never had more fun in a duck blind. Speaking of ducks, if you live near the shore, build a good blind on the beach out of seaweed, with a roof over it and a small hole to shoot through, put out a few decoys in front of you and call them in.

You can have more fun with a crow call than you ever got out of a duck call, and then some, for the crow will answer to it more readily.

Shortly after the experience related above I saw a crow call advertised and sent for one with which it did not take long to learn a little crow language, for it is much easier to learn to use than any duck call I ever had any experience with. I got my gun and went out to try it, and then my education began. I soon realized that the crow has a real language. You can caw garrulously for an hour like a crow while loafing in a tree and the others will pay no attention to you, or go on about their business and just pass the time of day in polite crow. With a different inflection (just a single drawn out note with a hint of warning in it) you can call them up within a few hundred yards and they won't come any nearer. Again, you can call a cheery welcome salutation as much as to say, "There is corn here, come on over," and the passing pilgrim will come right over unsuspectingly to join the feast; but to bring up a lot of crows fast, in a flock, keep up a long drawn out rasping gutteral caw-aw-awing, making the sound rise and fall continuously. Every gunner knows the peculiar caw

that a crow makes when mad, or when fighting an owl or hawk that he has found to plague. This will bring every crow within hearing as fast as it can come so lie low and have your gun ready, for they will come without a warning caw, be over you with a rush and away again as quickly when they see their mistake.

That is where a few block decoys come in. The call will attract them better than decoys, but if there are no decoys about to occupy their attention they will be looking for the caller and will be more likely to see you. One decoy perched on fence or dead branch and a couple on the ground will serve. They are easy enough to make out of a block of soft pine and a coat of black paint does the rest. Many a time I have set up a dead crow propped up with sticks with as good results, but it is a lot of trouble.

One day I was out with my pal, Vern, in a lane with a tall hedgerow on both sides of it, which afforded excellent concealment, and some wheat stubbles beyond, where the crows were in the habit of feeding. We called in some young unsophisticated crows, bringing down two as they passed over. We retrieved them and sat down to call, and a little later I heard a noise and looking

around, discovered one of our supposedly dead crows making off. Running after him, we caught him, and on looking him over discerned that a stray shot had glanced on his skull, and stunned him, but apparently he was otherwise unhurt.

Vernon instantly got an idea, and started for home on the run. In a little while he came back with the butt end of a fishing rod, and reel attached to it. He attached the end of the line to the leg of our live decoy and then we waited for another crow to come in sight. Soon a couple of them flew over the edge of the woods to the other side of the field from us. We let our captive fly off about thirty yards and then snubbed him and started to reel in. Such a flapping and noise one would never have thought that single crow could make, and the others flew to his assistance to be met with a couple of well-directed loads of shot, and crumpled up. We killed about a dozen over our live decoy that afternoon. Jim Crow was kept for a long time and became quite a pet, and also added much to the success of our crow shoots, in which he took a mischievous pleasure in seeing his free brothers killed.

A few years ago I secured a stuffed owl decoy; a big snowy owl attached to a block of wood, so that he could be nailed up in a tree. There were two ropes leading down from him into the blind, one rope would turn his head, and a pull on the other would flap his wings.

It is really remarkable how far a hawk or crow will see this owl and immediately they will make for it, particularly if you flap the wings to attract their attention. Crows will circle around cawing frantically and affording excellent shots but the hawks are the most interesting. It is an inspiring sight to see one of these big fellows go for the owl and one that you will never tire of watching.

I have seen a red-wing hawk sail over the decoy and when fifty yards in the air, close his wings and drop like a plummet from the sky. When a few feet from his supposed prey, he will set his wings, preparing to strike and the wind will whistle through them as he checks his speed.

Few people seem to know that each spring there is a northern migration of hawks, and at this time great sport can be had with them, over one of these stuffed owls.

The decoy should be prominently placed on a

tall dead tree on high ground, if possible, so that it will show up conspicuously over the surrounding country.

A friend of mine who does a lot of hawk shooting in western Jersey told me that with one of these owls he had killed two hundred and fifty hawks of various kinds in one season while the flight was on.

The camera man will find it fascinating as wonderful pictures can be secured of the hawk while attacking the owl.

The blind should be carefully made, not too thick, as the shots at crows and hawks are fairly high, consequently if the cover is thick over the head it will be difficult to shoot at them; on the other hand, because of their height they will see you without overhead protection. A thick, leafy bough that can be quickly brushed aside when you stand up to shoot is the best.

The shots are generally fairly long, so a good, close shooting gun is needed, and No. 6 shot chilled, I have found most satisfactory, although sometimes I have used No. 4 with better success late in the season when the cover was thin and the shots longer.

Remember, also, that as soon as they see you they start to climb, so don't undershoot.

Try it some time for the sport and the good of the game. There is nothing I know of to compare with it when the game season is closed, and it is mighty interesting at any time.

CHAPTER XIV

Deer Shooting

YEAR by year the big game hunter's goal becomes more difficult of attainment. Each succeeding year sees our North American mammals pushed back a little farther before the irresistible pressure of advancing civilization. What was two generations ago a simple task is now worthy of the skill of the most experienced hunter.

The moose is deeper in the forest—the caribou farther out in the barren—the sheep higher up in the most inaccessible peaks, and with this increasing shyness, they have one and all taken on a new defense of increased cunning, through their enforced association with man.

The successful hunter of big game today needs skill, resourcefulness, incalculable patience, and a knowledge of his quarry's habits in a greater degree than ever before. It is true—the railroad and the automobile brings one to the haunts of game quicker, and modern equipment has its un-

questionable advantages over that which our forefathers used.

Decidedly our firearms are superior in accuracy and killing power. Indeed we would be sadly handicapped were it otherwise, for it is equally true that our marksmanship must be better and our stalking ability superior, so that we may successfully contend with the increased wariness of our quarry.

The skill of the backwoodsman of old has been greatly exaggerated and embellished by time. He had to endure hardships and privation which tried his fortitude to the limit,—yet in skill he did not of necessity measure up to the 1927 standard to attain success.

However, the modern sportsman in most instances hunts with a professional guide whose duty it is to lead his patron up to the game. The one who usually spends but a few weeks in the wilds each year can hardly be expected to gain the experience necessary to successfully outwit his quarry—much less care entirely for himself under such trying conditions. It therefore follows that the prime necessity for amateur hunters as a whole—aside from physical fitness and patient determination, is the ability to shoot

straight and sometimes quickly—plus a suitable equipment.

The most important articles are a reliable rifle without which one cannot shoot straight; good footwear, correct for the country in which one will hunt—without which the strongest man will be crippled at the start, and a comfortable sleeping bag, for without rest one cannot work, and the modern big game hunter must above all things work if he hopes for success.

It will be taken for granted that the rifle will be a high velocity weapon of great smashing power and flat trajectory. It makes little difference whether it is bolt, slide or lever action—the amateur is not in the woods for long—none of them are liable to get out of order or be put to the hard usage an explorer or trapper constantly afield will give them. All of them can be shot faster than the average man can shoot accurately. It is only the shot which hits that counts and usually that is the first one fired.

The chief consideration as to the rifle is that it should hit a blow of not less than 2700 pounds energy at 100 yards range, and shoot a bullet of at least 180 grains weight—nothing less is suitable for the big game. Greater energy and a

heavier bullet is better for the beginner—light, high velocity bullets are for the experienced shooter who can place his shots. The rifle should have flat trajectory so that no sight adjustment is required for long shots. By long shots I do not mean a thousand yards—game is not killed at such ranges despite the silly yarns told by over-enthusiastic sportsmen with vivid imaginations. A first class shot cannot be certain of hitting and killing even a moose or elk at over 350 yards, for at that range even their large bodies blur into the finest front sight bead and one cannot tell where he is holding. The estimation of distance becomes more and more a matter of guess work as the range is increased and the trajectory of the bullet becomes higher.

When one considers this, plus the fact that our shots are often taken under most trying conditions, he realizes the futility of long shots, with iron sights.

One may be shooting across a deep valley or over water to an opposite shore where the range cannot possibly be judged with certainty. The best shots are often afforded in the dim uncertain light of early morning or evening,—in fog or in rain—into the sun or against a dazzling snow

bank. With such conditions the sights can barely be seen. One's position may be unsteady, the game moving and invariably it is partly obscured in shadow or by surrounding foliage. The expert appreciates these things and avoids long shots, preferring to show his skill by successfully stalking into certain killing ranges.

This was brought to me most forcibly two years ago when I was confronted by a mighty moose down hill from me at what proved to be only two hundred and twenty-five yards. It was raining and he was trotting past in the uncertain light of early morning—whilst I stood in huckleberry bushes up to my knees, where it was impossible for me to lie down and shoot. Fortunately I broke his shoulder at the first shot.

Should a shot present itself at any range from the muzzle up to two hundred yards, by aiming at the centre of the body just back of the forelegs, the vital parts cannot be missed if the hold is true. If the shot is noticeably over two hundred yards, hold at the top of the withers and the bullet will fall into or about the right spot. This rule, though rough, will serve for all big game from deer, sheep and goats, to moose, elk and brown

bear, if the rifle has a flat trajectory like the .30-06.

It is well to study a few photographs of big game or better yet, a few museum specimens, or in a nearby zoo, to familiarize oneself with the points of aim.

The most deadly spots are the brain, the spine, and the point of the shoulder—a single shot placed in any of the three will prove fatal. The brain shot is the least desirable. One is liable to spoil the trophy by smashing the horn or ruining the skull for mounting, and being the smallest target it is very easy to miss.

Remember always that the tendency is to shoot too high when shooting fast, and hold low. A low shot may break a leg if it misses the body, but a high one only scares the game into higher speed. This is particularly true of deer which bound along. Try to shoot as they are on the descent rather than rising.

The safest thing is to secure a standing shot—one such at about 100 yards regardless of the species is worth a dozen at running game or that standing at 200 or 300, and usually with patience and caution it can be accomplished. One

of the most experienced guides in the west, whose statements can be relied upon, declared in my presence, that almost all the game killed by his parties was brought down at 100 yards or less including not only elk, moose and bear, but goats and sheep as well.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the mere shooting of the game is but a small part of the skill involved, and the pleasure to be derived from big game hunting. The dream of all real enthusiasts is to secure their trophies unassisted —solely by their own skill and resourcefulness to bring down a noble quarry. Except in rare instances, this desire is not accomplished. As mentioned heretofore, the average man hunting for sport has little opportunity to acquire the necessary skill. Usually he does not continue big game hunting long enough to do so, and he continues to depend year by year upon the skill which he hires from his guide. Lucky indeed is he who has such a guide as the one that took me upon many a trip—who derived a pleasure from teaching his sportsmen as they went along. Forever volunteering the reasons for his methods and the stories to be deducted from the signs which we saw, he added inestimably to the pleasure of

hunting, sending me home with a feeling of having accomplished something aside from securing the horns that I carried back, which was worth a great deal more.

I learned among other things that to step on a stick which emitted a resounding crack was not fatal if done in the hearing of deer, provided that one froze so that one's presence would not be detected. Why should it—the sound will arouse suspicion, but twigs are falling and dry branches snapping all day in the forest. Invariably, unless one is seen, the deer will listen for a moment and go on feeding.

I also learned that when a deer's head is down feeding, one could safely move forward even in the open, as long as he froze in his tracks the moment the tail switched, which invariably preceded the lifting of the head to gaze around.

To prove this, last year I stalked a doe for three hundred and fifty yards across an open field without a vestige of cover to conceal me—quartering towards her from the rear and finally stood up within forty paces of her, while she gazed at me between snatches of brouse. *But the wind was right* and she did not see me move. Most game will detect a sudden movement and be off

like a flash—sound does not necessarily bother them.

One may fire two or three single shots in the course of a day at ducks or other small game while hunting deer and moose, but beware of two shots in succession. One will catch them unawares and they will listen—two and they know what it was and where fired and will be off.

When the wind is light or in the right direction a smoke does not harm in the woods where it does not carry, yet it would be ruinous on an open barren or dead water. I have smoked a pipe to within one hundred yards of where I killed a deer, but I knew the wind was right. Wind is the most important thing to watch in hunting all big game, except sheep; they will smell you long before they will either see or hear you.

Provided there is sufficient cover to conceal one's movements and he makes no unusual noise, one can safely stalk into fair range of his quarry on a cross wind, but to hunt down wind is as useless as staying in the camp.

Every animal within half a mile has warning of your presence and is off. In other words, if one is still-hunting with care, watching the country ahead and to both sides as he should and in con-

sequence, doing from a mile to a mile and a half an hour, his quarry, if he becomes careless or the wind suddenly shifts, has twenty minutes start. Never fail to watch on both flanks as well as in front, when a deer has traveled a way and is ready to lie down, or if suspicious of being followed, it will circle to one side and stand perfectly still watching its back trail. Should you come by then it will most often let you pass and then crash off.

It is equally impossible to still-hunt with success upon dry leaves where every footstep, despite the utmost caution can be heard for a hundred yards by the sharp ears of the wilds.

At such times, sit down and watch some open clearing where the signs show that game is feeding, or on some open pond where they come to water before dusk and in the early morning. The balance of the day, hunt the low lying swails where it is damp and you will not make a racket. Early in the fall the deer are in these swails, but when cold weather sets in during November, the bucks are usually upon the hardwood ridges.

Like all other species the deer feed early and late. It is well to hunt at sunrise and late in the evening, close to water, in fact at such times they

will invariably be found near some flowage or pond.

During the day when it is warm they are most apt to hide up in some thicket or swail, or upon a ridge where they can look down on their back trail while resting. For this reason, when tracking in the snow, one should keep a sharp lookout ahead, not only for standing deer which are usually seen, but for one which is lying in its form in the snow. Frequently a deer will lie perfectly still while you pass and sneak off after you are out of sight. The track of the buck is usually much larger than the doe's and rounder, the doe's being long and narrow. In a country where deer are plentiful, I have always looked forward to a rainy day to hunt. Like all other game they are not so much on the alert. The gentle falling of the rain carries one's scent to the ground and deadens every sound, one is flattered into almost believing that he has become a good woodsman by the silence in which he can quickly progress over the softened leaves. One will often find his deer at this time standing with its head in a little cedar or fir tree to protect it from the wet. On perceiving a deer, or a movement that is suspiciously like one, immediately freeze in your

tracks. A deer's eyesight is keen to catch the slightest movement. He will pay no attention to you if the wind is right, though you stand conspicuously in the open, providing you keep still. In the same way it will freeze in its tracks and let you walk by, close to. Usually the moment your eyes light upon it, realizing that it is discovered, it will whirl with a bound and dash off; deer never trot, they either sneak at a walk or bound. One must consequently remember to hold low. The tendency is to overshoot and if your mark is over one hundred yards away, either quartering or crossing, it is well to hold on a line with the brisket, directly under the nose; this should carry your bullet in somewhere back of the shoulder.

Always pay particular attention to the deer's tail as it flees. This flashing white flag can be seen a considerable distance after the rest of the animal has blurred into the surrounding forest. If on shooting, the flag remains up it is a sure indication of a miss for a deer will invariably drop its tail when struck, no matter how trivial the wound may be.

A good deer stalker will never have difficulty in bagging other game in a likely country, for no animals found upon this continent tax the sports-

man's skill so hard as the white-tail deer, with the two exceptions of the bear and the sheep. Set down an expert deer stalker in any country on the face of the earth and he will make a good account of himself. He is patient, persevering and cautious. He knows the habits of his game—reads their signs and quickly gains an intimate knowledge of the country he is hunting. He is an accurate shot—a quick shot—an experienced stalker and a first class tracker. If he is not all of these things he is not a good deer hunter; if he is, he can hunt anything successfully providing he has courage, and to lack this is a rarity.

Throughout the greater part of the country hounding deer has been prohibited. This has been of inestimable service to propagation. The white-tail deer is being recognized more and more as the backbone of our big game hunting, and they were at one time in serious danger of extermination, due to the use of hounds. It takes little more skill as a hunter to kill deer from a runway than it does by the other more despicable method of jack-lighting them at night, or potting them from a salt lick, both of which methods have, to a great extent, been eliminated.

Hounding deer is still the accepted method of hunting them in the old South—here it is to be sanctioned in view of the conditions existing; the deer living almost entirely in dense cypress swamps, where it would be impossible to hunt them successfully by any other method. The only fault I find with this is the almost universal use of the shotgun. A charge of buckshot cannot be depended upon with any degree of certainty to kill over 45 yards, though it will sometimes kill at sixty or over. This tempts the hunter to take chance shots, thereby wounding a great deal of game,

Buckshot has been accountable for the loss of more valuable game and untold misery than any other instrument of sport.

The state of New Jersey has an abominable law which permits the use of only smooth-bore shotguns with buckshot in deer hunting, due to the density of population. The law is condemned by every knowing sportsman in the country. If the rifle can be used with safety upon the private preserves scattered all over Europe, some of them on the outskirts of large cities, it can be safely used by legitimate sportsmen in Jersey. In the

name of humanity and good sportsmanship deer hunting should be prohibited for all time where the rifle cannot be safely used.

The mule deer of the West is quite different in habit from the Eastern white-tail. A creature of the mountains, he is found in more open country as a rule, which makes stalking far easier, but the shots will be at correspondingly longer range.

Whereas the white-tail is generally killed in thick cover at under one hundred yards, the mule deer will generally be killed on an open hillside and at anywhere from two to three hundred yards.

In Alberta they range very high, most frequently being located above timber line, or close to it in September and October, when the season is open.

This fall, returning from a hard hunt for sheep on top of the world in northern Alberta, we were still about five miles from camp and descending when my guide Nickerson, who was above me, signaled for me to stop.

Coming down to my level he said he had seen two fine bucks and thought that one was the one I wanted with a good head and would save the

day from a total loss. I had passed up several deer as I wanted an unusually good one.

We kept above them and stalked to about three hundred yards, where we saw it was impossible to get nearer. Furthermore, they were watching us and might make off any moment.

Fortunately, I had my telescope on the Springfield. Picking the largest I fired, he jumped and ran, and at three hundred and twenty-five yards the second shot caught him about six inches from the first and he crashed down the slope.

It proved to be a fine ten point buck and probably weighed about three hundred pounds. The mule deer easily run a third larger than their eastern white-tail cousins.

But the deer I was proudest of was of a little white-tail doe.

Five of us were in New Brunswick on a hunt and bad luck had dogged us constantly. Finally, near the end of the trip, a premature blizzard hit us and it snowed for three days. It was two feet deep on the level and clung to every bush so that one could not see twenty feet off the trail. There were eight sportsmen in the main camp, including ourselves, eight guides, a packer and

two cooks, and nothing to eat but beans, coffee and jam—without flour for bread.

It looked "pretty slim," as the saying goes, and when I proposed to the guides that we all start out for a deer for meat they laughed at the idea, saying it was impossible to hunt until the snow fell off the bushes.

Silenced but not convinced I picked up my rifle and slipped out alone. I went down the trail a mile and cut in onto a high hardwood ridge—that I thought would offer a possibility, as it was quite open.

In ten minutes I saw a little doe feeding beside a blow-down. One shot did it at short range, and I carried it back and broke up the card game in the cook shack by tossing it on the floor.

No buck ever looked as good that I had killed with a guide beside me. The moral is: never give up; in deer hunting one never knows when the luck will change.

CHAPTER XV

Moose Hunting

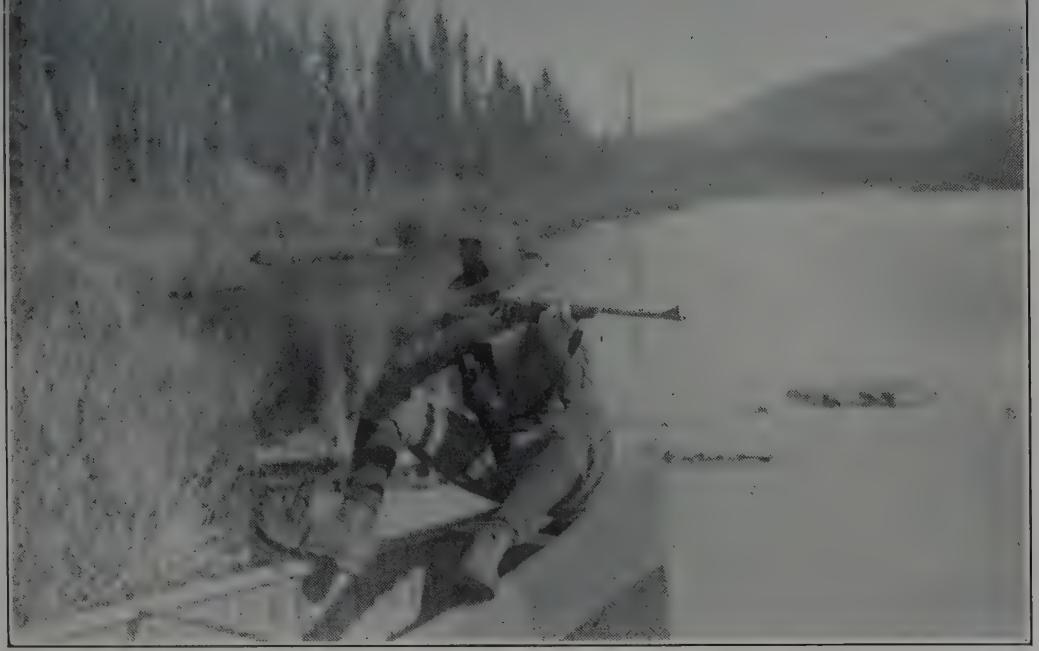
BROADLY speaking, moose and deer hunting are much akin, and all that has been said in the preceding chapter is true of still-hunting the former, though the deer requires the most skill. Not that the moose is to be scorned as a quarry, but he is less nervous in temperament and not so constantly on the alert. Being a heavy beast, his track is large and deep and easier to follow. His range is more restricted and when a guide finds a desirable bull, he generally knows where to locate him in the future. The moose is also a much larger mark and as he is considerably slower, even when scared, makes a far easier mark to hit. Both because of his size and the fact that he never bounds or runs like a deer, but goes off at a smashing trot, which, though it carries him over the ground rapidly, and one must lead well to connect, nevertheless affords a steadier target in the thick timber which they prefer.

To speak further of their gait, I never saw but

one moose break into a gallop and this one I had wounded badly high in the shoulder and he was in difficulty.

Some people think that the moose is stupid, but this is not really fair as they are usually hunted in September and October when the rut is on. At this time the bulls are traveling in search of the cows, and in their passion are inclined to be truculent and pay less heed to caution.

Five years ago while hunting in New Brunswick, I had killed my bull and as the time was getting short, and I was most anxious for my companion to get one to take home, I proposed to the guides that we take him to a famous bog fifteen miles away which they had not tried. Needing meat, I took the trail ahead of the party who followed about two hundred yards to the rear, all carrying heavy packs and with no pretense of traveling quietly, my purpose being to pick off a few partridge, or possibly get a shot at a deer. Just before we reached the camp I ran right into an enormous bull—within thirty yards of the trail—which continued to walk straight towards me, though I was right in the open, and he had certainly heard me and the rest of the crowd coming on. I called to my friend to hurry, meanwhile



How not to shoot from a canoe unless from the bank—
a famous New Brunswick deadwater

New Brunswick Moose killed by the Author, 1922

keeping the bull covered. He was in the rear of the guides, but ran forward, unslung his heavy pack and fired at about twenty yards range or less. At the shot, which took him in the shoulder, the bull lunged forward at us, and I brought him down with a shot in the spine.

This was during the rut, when the old fellow first heard us, and not knowing what it was, and probably thinking it was a cow, or another bull coming to give battle, came towards us.

Many people would call this a charge; it may have been, yet I believe if we had stepped aside he would have gone right by us, might even have run when he crossed the wind and got our scent. Moose are so big and powerful that they have nothing to fear in the forest except man; and they are not inclined to run as smaller animals will until they see or smell a man, particularly when thinking of other things in the rut, when both sexes are constantly bawling and otherwise making a lot of noise, which they do not do at other seasons of the year.

While I was in Nova Scotia a few seasons back, a sportsman who had hunted unsuccessfully for three weeks, and was going home, killed one on a road on his way out. A native whose wife had

left him home to mind the baby, killed one from the window as it stood in his orchard, near the little town of Caledonia. But to make an old bull come to the call, one that has been fooled before and shot at, will convince anyone that moose are not stupid.

I have heard others say they are easy to kill but this is untrue also. It is very seldom that you see or hear of one being killed with one shot, generally it takes three or four to drop him for good, yet the average shot is a lot better than the one which you get at a deer. I recall two moose which I have killed that had been hit before, one had a .30-30 lodged half-way up its back against its vertebrae, which had gone in from the stern. The wound was probably at least two years old, and perfectly healed. A deer or bear so hit would have been killed.

Sportsmen generally have the idea that deer are hard to kill but when properly hit they are no more so than any other American species, but they afford a small mark, particularly the vital spots, and as they are usually going like the wind, one does not hit them right once in a dozen times unless he is an expert. Consequently, when struck anywhere from head to stern their great

nervous strength will often carry them quite a way before they fall. Whereas the more phlegmatic moose is often hit when unsuspectingly feeding, and the shock will carry him off his feet, because of his weight, if struck through the shoulder so as to break it, he often cannot rise. But hit him while running, even smash one shoulder and penetrate the chest cavity, and you may have to hit him four times more near the same spot to put him down, as I had to on one occasion with a .30-06 Springfield. Simply because the first shot had paralyzed him as to shock, and the subsequent 220-grain bullets could not put him off his feet until his strength was exhausted. It is unsportsmanlike to hunt moose with such rifles as the .250-3000, 30-30, 32 Special and so forth. Nothing less powerful than the Springfield cartridge with 180 or 220 grain bullet is sure. Less powerful guns cause unnecessary misery by wounding a lot of game which escape.

Moose are hunted in two ways, either by still-hunting or calling, and the former is by far the most sporting way and the best for him who wants only a big head. In still-hunting the hunter usually has to display some skill, even though the guide is by far the most responsible

for success. In calling the hunter has nothing to do but sit quietly and make an easy pot shot on a huge animal at short range, generally not more than a hundred yards.

Perhaps I cannot do better on this point than to quote from the reply to my question of the finest tracker and caller I have ever known, a Nova Scotian guide, who has that reputation in his locality. "Still-hunting is the best sport," was the prompt reply, "both from the guide's point and the sport's. It's harder to track a wise old bull that is always circling down wind to watch his back track, and to engineer a greenhorn up to where he can get a shot, than it is to call, as a rule. Then again it takes a good man to call up a big head, and shows the caller's skill, for a good head means at least a six or seven year bull, and a moose which lives that long in these parts has generally been shot at or at least fooled and got away.

"Any dub can call up a young bull at the height of the rut, I mean anyone that knows how, a little. The farmers around here do it, though they never kill any big moose because they are afraid to go back into the woods where they are sure to get lost. They don't know the country,

and it's all so much alike that even a good woodsman will lose himself in it until he learns the way. So they just go out on some barren near the settlements and "moo"—that's what it sounds like. Honestly, I have seen them kill a Boot-Jack, (a young moose with two points on each horn), by making the darndest imitation of a bull moose that you could imagine. Why, I even saw a young sport who had never had a horn in his hands, pick up mine, right in front of the tent one morning—I was trying to teach him—and in a little while a young bull spoke kind of squeaky and walked right out on the bog.

"That's one side of it, but when you bring a real old one down to the bog that was two or three miles away from you at the start, one that is smart, and you have to talk to him for a couple of hours to convince him that it really is a cow, why sometimes you work for your money. That sort of thing shows up your sport too, for it is a lot more trying on one's nerves to sit still and listen to a bull grunting and batting his horns on the trees for an hour or so before he shows himself.

"Calling at night is the most exciting,—Lord, I have had 'em up within twenty yards of a

greenhorn that was scared to death more than once. You know how it is," and he chuckled to himself. I nodded for he had tried it on me, and it was an experience that I would not have missed for a great deal, for we had a cow and a bull bawling and grunting around us for an hour in a hair raising way that would make one think the very woods were falling on him.

Moose can only be called during the rut, which usually begins with the first hard frost, about September 15, and lasts until about the 15th of October. The proper time for it is in the early morning on a perfectly calm day. Some guides show their ignorance or carelessness by calling in the afternoon which is wrong, for as this man mentioned the wise old bull knows that it will soon be dark, and will not expose himself in the open until protected by the gathering dusk, though he will stay near by and grunt his challenge. In a like manner it is foolish to call on a windy day. In the first place the call does not carry far, one cannot hear the reply of an approaching bull, and sometimes they will sneak up without speaking. Also if there is any breeze stirring the old bull will always scent you and go

off, for he will invariably circle the wind to make sure before investigating further. On a still day his nose is defeated.

Consequently, one only gets the small heads of young unsophisticated bulls, by calling, unless conditions are right, and a good guide will not bother trying unless they are ideal.

The Quebec guides make a practice of calling at night from a canoe, paddling along the shore of some lake or dead water, which is a slovenly way of hunting, quite in keeping with the inferior guides usually found there. One cannot shoot well from a canoe—he cannot tell what kind of a head he is shooting at—he cannot hit anyway, at more than fifteen or twenty yards and the chances are that he will only wound the poor beast, which will escape to suffer abominably and probably eventually die.

I have killed two moose called by my guide, always in the daytime, and will not take any pride out of doing so again. Still-hunting is the sportsman's way. If you want to call at night, do your shooting with a flashlight and a camera. The best sport of all is to wait for the snow in November, when they have left the swails and

dead waters, which they prefer in the summer and early autumn, and track your bull down on the hardwood ridge with snowshoes.

One is often asked—are moose dangerous? Emphatically no. Not more so than deer—of course a wounded moose may be dangerous if one goes too close to him, but so is a buck under such conditions. Foolhardy men have been killed by stepping in to gralloch one that was down, whereupon the buck reared and struck out, ripping them open with its hoofs or a lunge of its antlers.

In the same way moose are dangerous. I got the devil from a guide for walking up close to one that was down. There are authentic cases of woodsmen being charged unprovoked, or by a wounded bull, but the true cases are rare. Usually it is a case of a bull being fired at, which in its rush to escape, not knowing where its enemy was, came right at him. Sometimes they will rush forward during the rut if they hear you, but only because they imagine it is another bull. Usually they stop short and stare when they discover the mistake.

Properly speaking, there is no dangerous game in the United States today. A hundred years ago there may have been, probably was, but

those which have survived have learned to fear the man and his powerful rifle. Even the grizzly will run like a scared rabbit unless cornered, and all the other game, including the "deadly catamount" of Leather-Stocking days, or mountain lion as he is now called, could be chased into the Pacific by an unarmed man with a good shouting voice.

Speaking again of calling, the ideal way to secure your trophy is to call and kill your moose unassisted. Before I left for Alberta this past summer I tried to find out why the Western hunter never called his moose. The nearest approach to it is a trick used sometimes by the northern Indians, of picking up a shed moose antler where it was dropped the winter before and banging it against a sapling as a note of challenge during the rut. Bulls will frequently come to this noise, thinking it is another bull rubbing his horns. But they never use the birch horn and call—why I do not know.

Now, I had always desired to attain the supreme in moose hunting and call up my own bull, and when we got into the hills I talked with my guide about it. He said no one ever called to his knowledge in Alberta, that it was generally be-

lieved they would not come to a call. This I did not believe and promised to try it out for myself, and the guide was quite willing to watch what he thought would be an interesting experiment.

So about five weeks later, on the return trip, with my license filled all save a moose, we found ourselves in a high camp near timber line quite early in the afternoon. It was on about the 25th of September—the night before had been very cold, but the sun came out hot and strong in the afternoon and it was absolutely calm, not a breath of air stirring. I told Nickerson it was an ideal evening to call and asked if he knew of an open barren nearby, and learned that there was one about a mile down our trail.

After a lunch, and when camp had been made ship-shape, we went to it. It proved to be an ideal barren to call on, and I then assumed the rôle of guide for him.

I pointed out that there were three things against us. First, he was chewing tobacco, expectorating frequently; secondly, we had approached the barren on a line parallel with it instead of coming to it on a right angle so that there was more chance of a bull coming to our call crossing our trail which, of course, would

spoil it all; thirdly, as we went along the edge of the barren to pick out a likely spot we did not see anywhere a single moose track, old or new. But I wanted to call.

Now I had practiced for years with a birch horn when in the woods and felt that I had it down fairly well, but there was no birch in the country from which to make a horn; so I had to use an old Government map printed on heavy paper which I rolled up to the correct size.

About seven o'clock, as the soft glow of evening was settling down around us, we sat on a log, my rifle beside me, and I made the first call. It resounded through the barren and rolled back from the mountainside opposite us. Then silence.

I waited about fifteen minutes and called again.

Nickerson touched my arm—"Did you hear that," said he. I thought I had but was not sure, and it sounded a long way off—two or three raps like an antler on a tree. But it must have been a mile or more away.

I called two or three times more in the next half hour. It was now getting dark and I wanted to return to camp, but Nickerson said no—he was sure he had heard that sound again and nearer.

I called once more softly, then he was insistent: he said there was something on the opposite side of the barren.

We waited for another ten minutes and then throwing all precaution to the wind I stood up and roared out a mighty call that resounded through the hills, preparatory to going home.

Nickerson chuckled, and grasped my arm.

"There he is!" he whispered.

Good Lord, what a moose! He stood at what I measured later at two hundred and twenty-five yards right in the open listening, motionless as a statue.

I grabbed the rifle, but it was too late to see the iron sights. I reached in my pocket for the invaluable telescope sight and quickly attached it. Taking careful aim at his shoulder I fired. The bull disappeared, and I ran forward a hundred yards to where I could see him hard hit, and two hasty shots in the shoulder put him down for the count.

It was a magnificent bull, with fifty-four inch spread and twenty-four points. The finest mountain moose I have ever seen, but what is more to the point, every Indian that saw the head said it was the best they had seen from that locality.

After taking off his head the next day we back-trailed him and found he had come about a mile and a half to the kill.

I picked my day, made my horn, did my own calling and killed the finest bull out of twelve I have shot unassisted. So I feel that I have earned him. Go thou and do likewise.

CHAPTER XVI

Caribou Hunting

I AM not a naturalist; in fact have not paid the attention to natural history that I should have, but from the shooting point of view caribou may be, broadly speaking, divided into two species, viz., barren-land caribou and woodland caribou.

In the East we have the Newfoundland caribou, which is a distinct barren-land type, and in the far North, including Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon, we have the mighty *Rangifer Osborni,* the true barren-land type.

A generation ago caribou shooting in Newfoundland was world famous. Sportsmen came from all over the world to take them, and magnificent heads were secured. During the War caribou were slaughtered by the countless thousands, according to reports, and shipped overseas as canned meat to the troops. Whether this is true or not the fact remains that Newfoundland is a great silver fox habitat. The natives

not only depend largely upon the caribou for subsistence during the winter, but they have remorselessly killed the caribou calves and cows where found through their winter range, leaving them to lie and rot, thereby making excellent bait for fox traps. As a result, such heavy inroads have been made in the great herd that caribou shooting has practically seen its best days in Newfoundland. In fact, so much so that one of my dearest friends spent two entire seasons up there and refrained from shooting a caribou for the simple reason that he did not see one of the many he encountered with a head sufficiently good to bring home.

Caribou in this respect are not like moose and elk. A good head is not really normal: one might almost say that it was unusual. There are more freaks among caribou than any other species. I think this is largely due to the fact that the horns are so much more slender that they are a great deal more delicate in development than the average buck deer horn or heavier moose and elk horn.

For the past three years the Government of Newfoundland has placed a closed season upon them but this, I regret to say, is probably not

rigidly enforced, and no law without enforcement is worth the paper it is written on. So long as women will pay the prices they do for silver fox so long will the caribou be slaughtered by the Newfoundlander, until either the fox or the caribou is exterminated and the law is rigidly enforced with sufficient punishment involved to make the risk of breaking the law a costly one.

Possibly, with that respect for its game which the Anglo-Saxon has shown more than any other nation in the world, the Government of Newfoundland will recognize the importance of the caribou to their barren island and afford it the protection it deserves. At any rate, it will be a good many years before the caribou shooting there is again worth-while.

In the old days it was a splendid adventure. The season was divided into two periods—an early season opening in August, when those caribou which summered in the southern part of the island could be hunted, and then there was the closed season until the migrating herds from the North had passed through the narrow neck of land intervening between the northern barrens and the southern barrens; in October, after the great mass of the herd had passed through this

restricted area, the season again opened, permitting shooting in the southern territory.

It was a magnificent sight indeed to stand on some little barren knoll with a pair of field glasses and looking over the great, dreary expanse of open tundra interspersed here and there with little bunches of fir and tamarack, to see winding its way over one of the network of trails worn in the course of centuries, a long slender line of traveling caribou.

The hunt itself was not difficult. I think its chief charm lay in the inaccessibility of the country, one might almost say in the hardships endured reaching Newfoundland and the often totally different semi-Arctic appearance of the country.

One was most often wet to the skin from the day he left St. John's until the day he got back. Rain or fog was almost incessant. When a beautiful day did come it was almost the most beautiful day in the world.

One reached the game country and camp was built in a little clump of firs near some good point of observation, and then one sat down to watch. Comparatively speaking, but little hunting was done. It was a waiting game until the herd was

spotted, in which you saw towering above the heads of the cows and calves in the rear and to the leeward of the rest of the herd, the mighty antlers of a fine stag, bobbing and weaving its way over the muskeg. Then it became a hunt. The difficulty was to move fast enough without being seen or winded so as to intercept the herd.

The average caribou bull weighs about four hundred and fifty pounds, but this gives no idea of his toughness. A caribou can stand more lead, I believe, and keep his feet, than any other animal we have in North America, unless it is the goat or the elk, and he travels, though only on a trot, at remarkable speed. It is very easy indeed to shoot behind him. In fact, I do not think any animal can trot like a caribou, and his splayed, broad hoofs carry him across soft ground where no man would dare to follow.

The most important articles of equipment for Newfoundland were mainly a high velocity flat shooting rifle, a fine pair of field glasses and adequate footwear with which to keep at least partially dry. Otherwise the equipment would be the same as that used anywhere in Quebec or New Brunswick.

Speaking of footwear, quite the best of all are

the Eskimo shoe packs made of sealskin, which can be purchased there, or at least could be some years ago, for about $5.00 a pair. They are very soft and very thin. A pair will be worn out in about a week or ten days' hard hunting, but while they last they are absolutely waterproof, and the only other things that I know of that are, are rubber boots, which of course are impossible. One had to wear in them two or three pairs of heavy woolen socks so as not to bruise feet unused to such thin gear.

Woodland caribou were formerly found in great numbers in New Brunswick. Now they are all gone. There are only a few left which are slowly but surely decreasing. The same is true of Nova Scotia, but they probably would never have increased sufficiently in either place to be on the shooting list of game. Now one has to go to Quebec and pretty well north of the Canadian National Railroad to find them, except on the Gaspé Peninsula, south of the St. Lawrence, or in Ontario, where they are still found in the Lake Superior district in considerable numbers.

Rangifer Osborni, the barren-land caribou, is, I must confess, a far pleasanter game to stalk.

The high barrens which he inhabits are not particularly difficult to hunt, the weather is certainly better and the terrain not quite as hard to travel over. And then again, the Northwestern trip is undoubtedly a pack horse trip, which relieves one of a great deal of the physical hardship of Newfoundland or Quebec.

There is, one might say, an intermediate variety between woodland and barren-land. This is the mountain caribou of Alberta, *Rangifer Montanis.* Being sort of a cross between the two with a horn usually longer than the woodland type, he is also a bigger and much darker animal. He is usually found close to timber line or above it, which would be at an average of about seventy-five hundred feet, though the Lord knows he has no difficulty or no compunction about climbing over anything in sight. I have seen an old bull lead his herd right over the top of the skyline at ten to eleven thousand feet, in what appeared to me to be the most inaccessible kind of country.

During September of 1926 I spent considerable time hunting mountain caribou north of the Smoky River, and perhaps a description of my successful stalk will best illustrate the method adopted.

We were nine days' travel from the settlement with a pack train of eight or nine horses, when on approaching the head of Fem Creek we saw on a bald knoll high above timber line a herd of about a dozen caribou. There were patches of snow here and there, and as they fed occasionally one would be silhouetted against the white background.

Immediately I dismounted, and finding a good rest, put the glasses on them, and the guide and I soon picked up a very important looking bull.

The caribou were all of a mile and a half away and high above us, which in this country means at least a two-hour stalk to get within shot of them. So we proceeded up the valley for about five miles, unpacked our pack horses, put up our tent, cut some wood preparatory to the cold nights that were coming, ate a hasty lunch and then rode rapidly back to the vantage point in the valley from which we had seen them.

Noting the country carefully with our glasses we saw in between us and the knoll on which the caribou had been a deep canyon. Fortunately, it was a blind one, enclosed at the far end. Provided the caribou were still in the neighborhood of where we had seen them due to the direction

of the wind a stalk would have been almost impossible. If we climbed directly up we could not see them until we were almost on top of them and might pass without seeing them. We could not hunt down the wind on them for nothing has a keener nose than a caribou. In fact, of all our American game I think the caribou is quite the keenest. The moose has a splendid nose and fair ears, the sheep has magnificent eyes, no ears to speak of and only a fair nose, but the caribou has all three faculties to a remarkable degree. Add to this his speed and tenacity of life and he makes a mighty worth-while quarry for the rifle. His great weakness is his love for the open spaces. Consequently he is more easily seen and, generally speaking, can be more easily stalked than other varieties.

But to return to my story, we quickly saw that the only feasible way of approaching this caribou was to climb up behind the canyon, skirt around ahead of it and thereby come upon the caribou from above, where we would be most likely to see them before we were perceived.

We started to climb about half past four; the strong Alberta sun was still warm; the going was terrifically hard—in places we had to pull our-

selves up from one mountain yew to another.

Nearing timber line we found a little narrow gorge worn through centuries of ceaseless waterflows from the glacier above, and proceeded to climb up this as one would a steep flight of stairs. We had no thought that we were near caribou, we were not particularly quiet—we couldn't have been if we wanted to—and much to our surprise just as we came out on the edge of timber line we saw a herd of about forty caribou.

There was just a fleeting vision of them standing motionless looking inquiringly in our direction, and then as we topped the rise they whirled and were off and up over the top of the rimrock.

Even a caribou, however, cannot climb fast at high altitude on a steep slope. As is usual, two magnificent stags kept the herd between us and themselves.

I threw myself down on the ground and fired one hasty, wild shot and then found it necessary to climb across the water course to the opposite side, where the guide was sitting. He put his glasses on the mass just as I sat down beside him and, using the telescope sight on my Springfield, prepared to shoot.

They were for all the world like a bunch of

cattle striving to get ahead of each other going into a corral, milling, jostling, first one in front and now another—I would get a fleeting glimpse of the bull and then he would be out of sight; I would sit down, hold the rifle on him and be just ready to pull the trigger when a cow or a calf would pass in front of the cross hairs. Without the telescope sight it would have been utterly impossible.

When we saw the caribou they were about three hundred yards from us. When I sat down to shoot they were at least four hundred. I fired nine shots in all and hit the stag twice; once breaking the lower jawbone and cutting the jugular, from which he would have bled to death, and a fourth or fifth shot passing too far back through the body. He went on for a hundred yards, and at about six hundred yards he weakened and left the herd, which slowly passed out of sight over the skyline. The guide urged me to shoot again, but he was so far away that one could not see the impact of the bullet in the background so as to judge his range.

We threw off all surplus clothing to lighten our loads and started to climb. In forty-five minutes we reached the point on a rather perilous slide where we had last seen the stag. Blood in

big splotches were all about us, but the caribou had gone.

I circled along the slide in a northerly direction. It was still bright where we were standing, but far below us at timber line the shades of night were rapidly closing in and obscuring the valley. The guide circled in the other direction. I hunted around, and when I found that the caribou had gone the other way I went back to look for the guide and couldn't find him. I finally decided that it would be impossible to do so that night and that the important thing was to get down below timber line where I wouldn't freeze to death, for it would have been impossible to have climbed down in the dark. It seemed as though I would never reach the bottom, and I wasn't sure until I finally reached the Creek.

I then turned south and found the horses and brought them back to camp. About two hours later the guide staggered in with the horns of the caribou which he found in the canyon only half a mile from where I had left him and he had, incidentally, fired three shots from a .44-40 as a signal to me, none of which I heard.

This is a very graphic illustration of how sound is quickly deadened at high altitude in the mountains.

I know of nothing as hard to hunt as the mountain caribou, or any other species found in this country with which one is less likely to meet with success.

I have seen lone bulls aimlessly wandering about right on top of the world at an altitude of eleven thousand feet. I have seen their tracks other places where you would hardly think a man could climb, much less a caribou, at higher altitude. Apparently, they have few obstacles. They are excellent climbers and get rapidly through the thickest cover, cross a morass that a man would not dare tread on and swim like an otter.

The generally accepted opinion of caribou shooting is that it is like killing cows. It used to be true, as I have pointed out, of the Newfoundland caribou; it used to be true of the woodland type in New Brunswick and Quebec, and it is still more or less true in some parts of Alaska and the Yukon in hunting the barren-land type, but to him who thinks that all caribou afford easy hunting I would recommend the mountain caribou of Alberta and the disillusionment that they will afford him.

CHAPTER XVII

Big Horn Sheep and Goats

IN writing upon sheep hunting it is not my purpose to pose as an authority, for one who has only killed three of the species is not eligible in that class, nor do I wish to reiterate all that has been said about it. Rather, my purpose is to bring out many points which struck me forcibly while hunting for them in what probably constitutes the world's best Rocky Mountain sheep country today—points which I have not seen mentioned elsewhere (and I have read everything available about *Ovis Canadensis*), or which if mentioned were not brought out forcibly enough to suit me.

While in Northwestern Alberta this September (primarily for a big ram) I kept a notebook and jotted down my impressions as I sat in camp at night, and they are still vivid in my memory.

That I was singularly successful the illustration of my trophy bears mute testimony to, but I traveled 3200 miles by rail and rode ten days,

doing 155 miles with a pack train, and hunted nine days afoot on the roof of North America, covering 120 miles above timber line, before I got my chance. So, naturally, I was ready to believe the oft repeated statement that the Rocky Mountain ram is North America's finest gift to the sportsman. All else pales beside him. The average sportsman would prefer a grizzly, but when he gets it, it is usually by luckily walking into one, or sighting it digging marmots on a side-hill, where he can easily approach for the shot. The same is true of sheep if one is satisfied to take the first fairly good one he sees, as most do. No one questions a bear—any bear is a bear and to be taken—but a sheep to be worth while must be a big one of from twelve to fourteen summers' experience—and he knows his business!

So if he is choosey, as a sportsman should be, and waits for a real ram, one to be proud of always, he must be prepared to hunt as he has never hunted before. He will suffer greater hardship, more exposure, more exhaustion and encounter, far more hazard, than he will generally in hunting bear.

For this reason sheep hunting for the discriminating sportsman is distinctly a young man's

game. Don't put it off too long. Unfortunately, the average sportsman does not attain the means to afford such a trip until well along in life, past the age when he can safely stand the exertion and certainly past the time when he can get any joy from it.

The poor guide is usually up against the problem of getting his out-of-conditioned sport up to a good head, and, believe me, it is a task.

Sitting in our tent one night while a blizzard was raging outside in a country where I had been painfully sunburned the day before, I discussed the possibility of securing my guide, Nickerson, a party for the next season.

"For God sake! Cap, if you can get me a couple of young ones," was his fervent remark.

"If any man comes you for advice about this country and he is over fifty, tell him to stay home. I have had two such in the past few years and I won't take out any more. It's too much work and responsibility. This is a young man's country.

"Do you know what Donald said to me when you dropped off the train? 'You're in luck, Nick, he's as skinny as a snake!' —meaning you."

I had reason to test and find the truth of these

remarks and I say, contrary to Greeley's advice to the young man, Old Man stay East. I realize this may stir the ire of some of my readers who are pushing fifty, particularly if they have hunted Alberta at that age. If so, they should consider my remarks as a compliment of the highest order.

There are noticeable exceptions to this rule (I know my old Daddy when he was sixty-five and I was twenty-five could put me out in one round), but you cannot be sure you are one of them until you get there. You may be as hard as nails, you may have, or think you have, a good heart, you may think you can stand dizzy heights and high altitude and damnable exposure, but 150 miles from the railroad, after stacking up $1500 for your trip, is not the logical place to find out.

I am thirty-seven, and I would hate to contemplate doing thirteen years from now what I had to do this fall.

Some do—and some got their sheep, but most of those I met this fall did not. I know of only six sportsmen who hunted north of the Smoky River besides myself, though there were probably a few more in such a large country. South of the River the country was over-run with parties

A splendid Rocky Mountain Goat. Length of both horns $10\frac{1}{4}$ inches, diameter at base 7 inches—note the shots in the shoulder

Ovis Canadensis at his best. Killed in Alberta by the Author, 1926. Diameter of both horns $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Curl of both horns $37\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Spread 24 inches

Mountain Caribou killed two thousand feet above timber line—antlers 38 inches long—22 points

An Alberta Black Bear—the one I wrote about

in for but thirty days, which prohibits their going farther.

In all, on both sides of the River I know the results of nineteen guns, including my own: three of us got fine heads, five more brought out trophies which should not have been killed, and the remaining eleven returned sheepless. I believe this is fairly representative of sheep hunting, though in an average fall, when the weather was normal, the Alberta average would be finer.

Yet, I saw one hundred and thirty-one sheep in one day—all ewes and lambs it is true, which are easy to see, but it shows there are a lot of daddies somewhere around.

I made the comment to my guide that it was quite within the range of possibility for one to be badly sunburned in the morning in this country and be frozen to death before night, which he admitted was true.

To illustrate, let us suppose you left camp on a warm morning, and started to climb. Getting to timber line, due to the strenuous exertion, you discarded your jacket, or sweater, in the pocket of which were your matches; you climbed to the top, soaking wet under the strong Alberta sun;

you crossed the range, and then the wind changed. The temperature dropped sixty degrees and you were lost in a blinding blizzard and unable to get down—Finis! But it is not probable. Nevertheless, it shows how hard it is to dress correctly. Water will freeze in your bucket at night in August—but you are probably hunting in September.

You leave camp and climb to the top—away from you in every direction roll the endless crags and peaks of the glorious Rockies, eagles are flying far below you, the sky is as blue as a turquoise, the sun beats down on you pitilessly—you have climbed slowly but steadily for two and a half hours, yet you are not more than three miles from camp and could return in an hour.

You sit down to rest—everything you have on saturated with perspiration. Suddenly you feel chilly—in ten minutes, if you have been so unwise as to sit that long, your teeth are chattering. Putting on your sweater and coat, which the guide is carrying in a little rucksack on his back (if he is wise and has one) won't make you warm. Consequently, you cannot rest for long on top.

Woolens are imperative. They must be light and easy to move in, but you won't be warm in

any combination of clothes. You have simply got to keep going until you climb down again to timber line, save for short rests to look over the country with the glass and to regain the breath which you are forever losing while climbing.

Speaking of glasses, I have always contended that the six-power binocular was the best for the hunter, due to its wide field of vision, absence of vibration and high illumination, plus its absence of bulk and weight. And for general use it is best, but for sheep there is nothing too large.

I took out a fine pair of ten-power glasses, which my guide carried, and I often wished they were twenty-power. I would never think of going without them again. One can always sit down and rest them so that the chief disadvantage of the high-powered glass is eliminated.

Such binoculars are expensive. I really believe that a Scotch deer stalker's telescope of about twenty-power would be the best rig, carried by the guide in his rucksack and supplemented by a light pair of six-power prismatics carried by the sportsman.

Footwear presents a problem for most men in all kinds of hunting, but under any other conditions which I know of it is easier to solve.

Personally, I carried one pair of still-hunting shoes, with leather tops, rubber feet and crepe rubber soles; one pair of light army officers' shoes cut rather high to use with spiral puttees, and with plain smooth leather soles; and one pair of slightly heavier eight-inch high, with short, Swiss soft iron hobs in insole and heel. The crepe rubber is splendid so long as it is dry—one can climb like a fly—but if it is wet one is worse off than a cat without claws, in Hades. Rubber, even the crepe rubber, affords no security on wet rocks or grass on even a gentle slope, and in sheep hunting one is often on shale or wet grassy slopes with better than seventy-degree angles.

One sweltering hot day I started out with the rubbers and was caught in a thunder shower a few hours later, and I learned about crepe rubber then. The Swiss have been climbing harder mountains than ours for centuries—they should and do know best.

The weather is so uncertain that one can never be sure, We may start over bone dry rocks and encounter rain or snow, or have to cross a glacier, before we get back, and the only things equally good for all conditions are soft iron Swiss hobnails, about twelve in the sole. six in the instep

and six in the heel. One wants to take a lot of them, as a few will fall out each day and must be replaced. Their only drawbacks are weight and noisiness; the first must be tolerated, and in sheep and goat hunting noise, in my opinion, is seldom a serious issue.

One day we climbed to the summit of a range and saw nothing in view with the glasses. Continuing on our way we ran into a flock of ptarmigan and I killed two with four shots from a .44-40 Colt. The report crashed out in a most disturbing manner to my ears, yet within a hundred yards I looked over a cliff and there, another hundred yards below us, was a band of ten sheep entirely undisturbed by the racket. The wind was blowing from them to us and the additional height had done the rest. Personally, I agree with the generally acknowledged advice always to get above your sheep if at all possible. One can then in most cases go directly downwind to them if the conditions make a stalk to within range impossible from any other direction, as the wind is invariably rising and will carry your scent above them. Secondly, they hardly ever watch above them, fearing only that which is below. Their flight, if you are not perceived, will gener-

ally be up, which may bring them nearer.

Speaking of wind, I believe the sheep trusts his nose but little, but if his wonderful eyes find you he will watch you patiently for hours from a point of vantage. Nevertheless, I think his lack of nose has been greatly exaggerated, because air currents are so erratic in the mountains, and one will often be willing to swear that the wind is blowing directly to his quarry when actually it is being carried above it.

The day I killed the big ram we found him watching us, silhouetted against the skyline, from the very top of the highest peak in range. With the powerful ten-power binoculars he was but a tiny speck in his bleak rocky fastness.

There were three of us. We had been trailing an old she grizzly and her cubs when first we spied him, standing like a statue watching us far below in a big basin, where the bears had fed off a kill.

We detailed the wrangler to keep in sight of Mr. Ovis, to occupy his attention while we skirted the base of the mountain so as to come at him from behind, as indeed we had to do, for not even a goat could have climbed the sheer face of the peak from the near side.

In about a half hour we reached timber line and started up over the shale, going as straight as we could to save time. We were then exposed to the wind, which was blowing about forty miles an hour. Soon we reached snow, and were forced to stop three or four times to rest. In an hour and a half we reached the top. We could see our wrangler below, but did not know just which of three ledges our sheep was behind. Nickerson thought the nearest, I thought the farthest—the truth was the second one.

Suddenly, as we approached it, there was a clatter of shale and five sheep sprang into view not thirty yards from us. Four of them were of the type one dreams about—a huge black looking fellow leading, three others with fine full curls behind him, and a nice little fellow, probably a six-year-old, with a three-quarter curl bringing up the rear. In less time than it takes to describe it, they appeared at a gallop, and one by one, like circus ponies jumping an obstacle in the ring, went up over a ledge and disappeared on the other side before I could fire a shot.

Now, they did not see us, I am sure, for if they had we would never have gotten so near. The nature of the ground was such that they would

have seen us for the last half mile and we would have seen them also. Nor did they hear us, for we could not hear a shout in that gale. I am convinced that an eddying swirl brought our scent to them, and the only avenue of escape was along the crest.

One often wonders if he will be able to stand the altitude. To begin with, I am convinced that here, as elsewhere that I have hunted, the "altitude" is exaggerated. That of the chief peaks and passes may be known accurately, but everything else is judged by them. One can never tell about altitude. One may be in the pink of condition and simply have to get out of the country quick; another puny little man will eat it up.

I found that I could climb as high and as fast as my guides, with no more fatigue than they showed. In fact, in a panic I would often climb a steep slope of shale or a bad crag entirely too fast, but the dizzy, precipitous drops did get me as they never did before in the easier country I was used to. Often at night I would awake with a start from a case of nerves and clutch madly at the sleeping bag, thinking I was falling. Quite frequently I was scared stiff on a bad stretch, and once I thought I was gone, and would have been

except for the guide. And once, to my shame, I turned back, though it was only two hundred yards over the top and took me seven miles to go around, but all the gold of Midas would not lure me to cross that dreadful crest.

Yet, the lure of one's quarry will work wonders. When that band of sheep disappeared from view we had to run along a crest, where I could almost have thrown my hat to the bottom, so sheer was it. Yet I never gave it a thought until the guide gently chaffed me about it later.

When we got over the ledge the sheep were out of sight. We ran forward until we reached a spot from which we could see them galloping down the mountain on a transverse shoulder.

The big black ram was, of course, still in the lead when I sat down to shoot, using a sling strap, and with an elbow on each knee for steadiness. The sheep were then about three hundred and fifty yards away.

I fired eight shots and hit him four times before he quit, though still very much alive.

This brings us to the rifle. The average equipment of a rifle with plain, coarse open sights of about the power of the .30-30 would have been just a little more useful than a snowball. Sheep

are much the color of their usual surroundings. These were in single file, bobbing up and down so that now you saw the leader and now you didn't.

My old favorite, the .30-06, was equipped with a new telescope sight of an expensive variety, adjusted with tack hole precision.

At that exact moment it was worth several hundred dollars to me.

My third or fourth shot hit the old chap high in the left hind leg, breaking it; about the fifth got the right fore shoulder as he turned across our front, quitting the band; the other two were scattered in his anatomy. Yet, with only two good legs he got at least two hundred yards farther down the hill before a snow drift stopped him in a ravine.

Don't take an expensive trip with an inadequate weapon selected as an economy—good work demands good tools.

The rifle which Lieut. Colonel Roosevelt carried in Asia for Ovis Poli weighed without the scope over nine pounds, and he had to climb far harder country than you ever will encounter here. That is overdoing it. But light rifles are very attractive to carry until you have to climb a moun-

tain, run a hundred and fifty yards at the top by way of making it harder, and then shoot downhill in a gale of wind at a band of running sheep—then my eight and one-half pound outfit was not a bit too heavy.

Now as to nourishment. I know of nothing more abominable than dry, cold sandwiches on an equally dry, cold mountain. I simply cannot down them without water, and glacier water is a good thing to take sparingly—it cuts the wind and may give you cramps.

Chew gum to keep the throat from being parched while climbing, then you won't have to drink much.

For food we carried two or three ten-cent bars of chocolate apiece (the Swiss use a highly nutritious bitter chocolate, which is better, but it cannot be had here), and munched it on the way. We never had to stop to eat—chocolate provides a lot of warmth when you feel cold—and we never got back to camp hungry, and it was practically nothing to carry.

This is not said in favor of Prohibition (I like a drink of hard liquor as well as the next) nor is it an ad for Campbell, but if you must carry something hot, leave your toddy back home and

carry a thermos of hot vegetable soup in the rucksack.

To sum up equipment in brief:

Don't let anyone talk you out of hobnails in your boots, nothing can take their place, and wear spiral woolen puttees with them, which are warm, and can be used to tie up a broken limb, or as a rope—they outwear anything else and protect you from bruises.

The only glasses to consider are the best—not less than eight-power; ten-power are better.

The rifle should be a .30-06, 7 mm, 270 W. C. F., or .318 Express. Nothing larger or smaller is quite as good. And don't fall for a featherweight because you find it easier to carry. What you want is a bullet that will carry up at long range. Your shots may be long, as mine were in this instance, and you can't do justice to yourself with a six and one-half pound gun.

Your entire pack, including sleeping bag, should be limited to one hundred and fifty pounds, which is a one-horse load. Mountain ponies cannot carry more and travel fast, and very fast means only twenty to twenty-five miles a day—often you cannot make more than five in a windfall country, or through snow.

Referring again to range, I do not seek to imply that one must always take a chance at long range. The two sheep I killed previously were killed one at one hundred yards while lying down, and the other at one hundred and twenty-five yards standing—both easy, and killed with one shot apiece.

All that I have said of sheep hunting applies equally to the Rocky Mountain goat. Most writers on these species have claimed that the goat ranged higher. It may be that in countries that have been more remorselessly hunted and the game consequently is wilder that the goat does range higher, but in my experience the goats could have invariably been killed at lower altitudes than I have found the sheep. Mind you, I have seen goats where no sheep could possibly climb, and I have seen goats higher than one usually does see sheep, but in a good goat country it would seldom be necessary to climb right to the very top to kill a goat.

To illustrate my point, this fall, while hunting a high range for sheep, we saw below us—possibly fifteen hundred to two thousand feet below us, and a mile and a half or so across the valley—a goat, and being alone early in September one

would naturally assume that it was an old billy, which it proved to be.

We climbed down through a protecting ravine, crossed the valley and got to within three hundred yards of the goat on a saddle opposite the one on which he was wallowing in the soft shale, shooting across one saddle and an intervening one, to the goat on the near side of the third. This beast probably weighed three hundred and fifty pounds, and snow white against the blue shale he stood out like a sore finger. Even at three hundred yards it was a very easy shot.

This, in my experience, is typical of goat hunting. Time and again while hunting sheep I have come across goats wallowing or resting in some high basin far below me, and usually they won't start to get out of the way until you are within three or four hundred yards of them.

They are not nearly as quick to see you, they do not take alarm anything like as quickly as a sheep does, and when they are alarmed they do not climb nearly so fast. Their one thought is to go higher, and they will start on a pedantic pace which will take them slowly but surely away from you.

Consequently, goats are easier to hit, they are

a better defined mark because of their color, they are much less likely to be alarmed during your stalk and far less likely to wander off from the point where you have spotted them before you can get in range.

The only thing which makes goats difficult is that they will climb into inaccessible places where no man could possibly follow (but usually these places can be avoided), and they are much harder to kill. In fact, I believe that of all our North American game the goat is by a wide margin the toughest and will carry off a great deal more lead. Goats are more often killed in the course of hunting sheep, as they inhabit the same range.

CHAPTER XVIII

Black Bear and Grizzly

BEAR, in so far as the sportsman is concerned, may be divided into two general species, grizzly and black bear, grizzly taking in the Alaskan brown bear, which though not a silver-tip, is really a grizzly, and black bear, including the so-called cinnamon and brown bear of the States and Canada

Of all the animals that still roam this continent of ours, the bear surely deserves the palm for his sagacity and ability to hold his own despite the encroachment of civilization and the relentless pursuit of man.

As a matter of fact, I do not know of any hunt more unlikely to be concluded with success than a bear hunt, unless it is conducted in the still primitive sections of Alberta and British Columbia and Alaska.

A few years ago, while on a moose hunt in New Brunswick, I was overtaken by a premature

snowstorm of severe proportions. The ground was covered to an extent of about six inches over a period of ten days. The first day out after the storm, in making a loop of about twenty miles my guide and I crossed eight bear tracks which we could positively state were of different animals, and several which may have been duplicated. In one instance it was an old sow followed by two cubs; in another instance two bears of the same size; in a third instance it was a huge track which could not have been mistaken for any of the others, and again a bear with a crippled paw, which left a distinguished mark, which had probably been caught in a trap and gotten loose. This is a good many bear to cross in one day's hunt at a time when one was positive the tracks were not over four or five hours old, yet one could hunt this section for ten years and never see a bear.

To illustrate further his remarkable ability to take care of himself: deer have long since been exterminated in the mountains of North and South Carolina and Tennessee. The lawless mountaineer many years ago potted the last deer in the country. One of our best American authorities on the Southern mountaineers says he has known these excellent riflemen to walk as many

as twenty miles in a day to kill a gray squirrel which they had seen.

The country is practically devoid of game with one exception: there are still bear and they are sufficiently plentiful to make hunting worthwhile with hounds.

So much for the ability of the bear to care for himself. And what an inoffensive little chap bruin is. He desires nothing so much as to be left alone, and in so far as danger is concerned, he will run from you every time like a scared jackrabbit.

One peculiarity which I have noticed about the bear, and in which many of the best-known guides have borne me out, is the peculiar antics he will go through to escape from a shooter he has blundered into. (Most bear are killed under these conditions.) I remember sitting on a runway when a black bear suddenly appeared like a ghost within twenty yards of me. To use the guide's expression, "he didn't turn around, but just turned inside out and went the other way," and as every shot was fired he rolled and tumbled down the hill in front of us. I was quite certain that the bear was badly wounded, that it had been hit several times, but yet we never found a blood

sign. The guide ruefully shook his head, admitting that he had on several occasions seen bruin perform in this manner. Whether this was intentional, or whether he merely stumbled and fell repeatedly in running down a steep side-hill I cannot say—the result was satisfactory for the bear. I think this peculiarity is largely responsible for the idea that the black bear is extremely hard to kill. Sportsmen often sincerely believe that they have wounded bear that were never touched. An Alberta guide cited a similar incident to me.

I would as soon start on a bear hunt in Eastern Canada, Maine, the Adirondacks or Pennsylvania, as I would expect to win a one hundred to one shot at the races. Bears are killed by deer hunters in these sections who blunder into them by sheer luck. They are hunted persistently by others for years and have never been seen. More often they are trapped and shot by the heroic sportsman at close quarters. I would rather feel that my bear was still picking blueberries on some brown hillside than take him in this ignoble manner.

There is just about one chance in the North woods of getting a bear. If you kill a moose and

happen to be in the woods for a couple of weeks in fairly warm weather afterward, occasionally look over the carcass, and if a bear has been attracted to the bait, by watching it you may get a shot. And for this reason a good guide will always make a mental note of where his previous parties have killed their moose so that others going into camp can profit by the bait left when the game is cut up.

The only successful way to hunt the Eastern black bear, and a thrilling way too, is behind hounds, as they are hunted in the Southern mountains and the cane-brakes of Louisiana and Mississippi. This is sport indeed.

The grizzly is a very different person. He has the courage which the black bear lacks, and quite as much bear sense. Unfortunately, the physical difference of the country which he most frequently inhabits in the mountains of the West makes him an easier prey to the sportsmen. He is truly the monarch of American big game—that is the unfortunate reason he is almost exterminated today.

There are still a few grizzlies in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming and northern Idaho. There are also a few in the

Bronx Park Zoo. I mention the Zoo for the simple reason that there are quite as many there as there are in many localities where a lot of sportsmen hunt them. There are probably, according to the best American authorities, not many more than two hundred and fifty real grizzlies in the entire United States today outside of the zoos and Yellowstone Park. The Park Commissioner claims that there are approximately fifty grizzly in the Park, and yet most of the successful hunts are conducted along the edge of the Park. It is an excellent illustration of what protection will do for a big game animal and for the sportsman, just as the rest of the country is an excellent illustration of what lack of protection will do, with one exception: the excellent laws and the enforcement of them in the State of Pennsylvania has made it possible now to kill from six hundred to seven hundred per year in that state. In Pike County less than one hundred miles from New York City, a sow weighing six hundred and eighty pounds was killed in 1923.

There have been a lot of fairy tales circulated for years by Westerners of the brand who insist upon wearing rattlesnake hat bands and elk teeth

cuff buttons and long hair, as to the ferociousness of the grizzly. This type of man contends that he is vermin to be killed on sight and tells long lies as to the numbers he has vanquished in the past. The rest of the sporting community believe it, largely because they like to believe it. We would all like to believe that there were wild Indians on the plains today, only we have no excuse for believing so.

The grizzly is a tough customer. He is a bad customer if cornered. There is no question about it, he is fearless and a fighter, but he also has, as I said before, common sense, and like every other animal of the North American Continent he will deliberately avoid a conflict every time if there is half a chance of getting away. So good an authority as the late Colonel Roosevelt said that on two occasions he had been charged by a grizzly but as to whether it was a deliberate charge or an attempt to escape was questionable. He really thought that the grizzly, hearing the report of the gun, in a panic had started off from the sound of the danger and not knowing where it had come from had gone directly toward him.

Men have been killed by grizzly, men have been killed by black bear in the southern cane-

brakes. For that matter, they have been killed by spike-horn, white-tailed bucks which they foolishly walked too close to when wounded. Authentic instances are really rare. I personally know several good guides who have been deliberately charged by grizzly, in almost every case by wounded grizzly, and some whose word I would swear by will insist that they have been charged by unmolested grizzly which they came upon at short quarters. But even when infuriated by a wound the grizzly is not the tough customer that some of the large cats, such as the tiger, leopard, and lion, are. He will come on full tilt and strike a smashing blow with his paw when passing, but usually dash right on and not stop to mutilate his victim.

I am not at all sure but what it is too late to preserve the grizzly in this country. There is so much ignorance as to his depredation and menace, there is so little appreciation of his value and there are so few of them left that the balance will have disappeared entirely by the time the public can be awakened to the truth. Consequently, speaking of the United States, a chapter on grizzly has no real place in this book. To my mind there is nothing more absurd than to listen

to the inexperienced sportsman tell of the grizzly hunt he is prepared to start on in the States the coming spring, or has returned from. They are still plentiful in many parts of British Columbia, Alberta and the Yukon, but they won't be long unless the bear is given the protection which he deserves very soon.

Any rifle which is suitable for deer is quite powerful enough for black bear. Nothing less than a .30-06 should be used for grizzly, a more powerful cartridge is desirable, particularly for the large Alaskan variety.

Next to the rifle the most important item of equipment is a field glass. On the mountain slopes where the bear will be found feeding in the West, the hunting is generally done to a great extent on horseback, riding from one point of vantage to another, and carefully scanning the country ahead and sitting down to watch likely spots with the glass.

A prismatic binocular of about eight-power is the best for the purpose. After the bear has stopped and has settled down to feed, the problem is to get within range without being seen. For this purpose the glass must be an excellent one, and a rifle while having a bullet of sufficient

weight to strike a smashing blow at the same time have the flatness of trajectory which makes it possible to connect successfully with the quarry at a range of three hundred yards.

As an illustration of some of the preceding remarks, in October, 1926 I was returning to civilization from the most successful hunt I have ever had, with the bag completely filled, save for bear, when riding at the head of my pack train I saw, far up on a hillside above the trail, three bears about a mile away.

In a like manner on the tundres of the North, in the Aleutian Peninsula, the famous Alaskan brown bear is stalked to foot. Nothing could be more thrilling than a pack train bear hunt in sections of Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon, which are still sufficiently remote and well-stocked with bear to make it practical, provided one is prepared to hunt hard for two months.

A somewhat easier way, though even more expensive, is to go out in the spring. The grizzly hibernates just as the black bear does and comes out very lean, and his pelt is at its very best. The scheme then is to get into the hills as soon as the snow is gone, kill two or three worn-out

horses for bait at widely diverging locations and then take up the monotonous duty of riding from bait to bait each day until one of them has become sufficiently high to attract the bear. Once the bait has been visited, the hunters will, of course, camp near the spot, watch the carcass day and night, to secure his trophy. The process does not appeal to me; in fact, no form of bear hunting does quite as much as the royal game of following the hounds on horseback through the southern brakes.

Grizzly are also hunted with dogs. It is probably the most thrilling form of hunting them. One is constantly in action and it tries one's nerves to the limit in riding over some of the terrain, where a false step of one's mount may mean a dash into eternity. The only disagreeable feature of it is that it robs bear hunting of its danger in so far as the quarry is concerned. The bear is fully occupied under such conditions when cornered by the hounds and terriers; one has only to walk in and give him the coup de grace at comparatively easy range.

CHAPTER XIX

Woodchuck Stalking

I HAVE participated in many and varying forms of rifle shooting, some usual, and others most unusual at both large game and small game and I have yet to find one which so completely fills the bill for me as stalking the wary little woodchuck upon his native heath.

To the real rifle enthusiast when all is said and done, there is a great deal lacking in big game hunting. Conditions have changed rapidly in the last generation and there is a noticeable absence of the primary requisite, namely shooting. Too many weary miles—weary days to be more explicit—between shots.

To give a concrete example, in 1925 I returned from such a jaunt whereupon I hunted for nine days before I fired a shot. In fact, I traveled by rail seven hundred miles and walked and climbed one hundred and fifty miles to fire my Springfield at a moose. In the course of the next four days I fired at one deer which I killed

and at another which I missed, then I came home. In all I traveled sixteen hundred miles for those three opportunities.

Then there is another equally unsatisfactory phase of it. Speaking in a broad sense, considering the usual shot rather than the extreme case—the shots are not satisfactory to a marksman. To the man who has been there before and is cool in the presence of game—in fact, to the rifleman who knows his business and particularly who knows his rifle, they are either absurdly easy or just chances which he takes as a matter of course at a vanishing flag.

To illustrate—this moose which I went so far to kill stood at about 125 yards, mostly concealed by the trees around him, yet a black patch of about two feet square cleanly showed. I could not tell what part of his anatomy it was but was reasonably sure it was the forward section and with a powerful rifle such as the Springfield, a bullet so placed, if it does not knock him down will generally so demoralize him that the coup de grace can be given before he recovers from the shock. Yet, out of many of these which I have killed, this was the most uncertain chance I ever had to take—as difficult as hitting the five hun-

dred yard bull at one hundred yards. Should one feel proud of it?

Of course, the mystery and vastness of the great northern reaches has its all-compelling charm, the hardship endured and the trophy secured has its value to be considered, but that is apart from the shooting.

One does get long shots on occasions in the mountains of the northwest and the deserts of the southwest too and those fortunate enough to get to Alaska, Asia, or Africa will get lots to shoot at but most of us are not so lucky.

The big game shooting of the average man on the average opportunity is a simple thing. Compared to woodchuck stalking, it is like hauling in a bluefish on a hand line to taking a brook trout on a dry fly. There ain't no comparison.

Now we are getting to the subject—woodchucks.

I have hunted these little fellows through the hills of New England and New York for several years in the spring and summer, when there is nothing else to be gunned and I have learned to look forward to the sprouting of the pussy-willows with the same keenness which an angler shows for the first hatch of flies.

The woodchuck comes out much earlier than most people suppose, though they do not move about much until the sun gets warm. Consulting my game register, I find my earliest kill was on the 4th of April. I well remember the morning, for there was snow on the ground and a bitting wind blew across the bleak hills, yet I killed two of them out feeding near their holes. Later on, one would not find chucks out on such a day, but early in the season, being about starved from their long fast through the winter, they will brave most inhospitable weather.

Usually chuck shooting is poor on a cloudy day, though they apparently do not mind the rain for I have shot a lot of them on warm days with a soft drizzle falling. The shooting season begins about the time the trees are in bud and ends when the autumn leaves fall, though a few of them show earlier and one is occasionally found out later but these are unusual cases and not sufficient to afford sport. The best of the season is the month of May for the sun is then warm, the lush grass affords good feed for them, yet it is not long and does not conceal them as it will later. In the middle of summer the shooting is most difficult and not one in ten can be seen

except when sunning themselves in the middle of the day on a rock or stone wall, and these are most often covered with poison ivy and brambles which camouflage a chuck perfectly. After the harvest when the hay is cut, the shooting is improved though not as good as in May for they have become used to the grass as it grows and are apt to be quite shy and watchful after it is gleaned and they lose its protection.

The best time of day to hunt is their feeding hours from seven to nine or ten, after which they go to the walls to bask in the sun or lie on the edge of their holes with just the head sticking out. In either case they are a much more difficult mark, and many of them despite great care will be overlooked. Also in the evening from four until dusk when they move about again for supper before holing up for the night.

It is worth noting that we will often find them prolific in one certain spot and there will be a boundary line as definite as if cut with a knife beyond which they are never seen, though the country appears to be quite the same and to hold just as much food of as good character. I know one particular spot which always holds a lot of woodchucks, though I have very nearly shot it

out or at least thought so at the time. In a few months they are just as plentiful, the old holes containing new tenants. I believe the character of the soil has the most to do with it. Invariably chucks prefer hilly pasture land, the rockier the better and it is generally of a sandy nature in which they can easily burrow. Never have I found them plentiful in a district where the ground was of a hard nature.

Next to pasture land, they have a fondness for old orchards, where they consume a great deal of fruit lying on the ground, and about old buildings; for that matter, they are not averse to a garden patch behind your house, even though there is an unfriendly dog about—but above all else, they prefer clover as a diet.

By way of equipment, I prefer a stout pair of hob-nailed shoes with knickers and heavy stockings, a flannel shirt and dark sweater if necessary, or for summer when it is hot, a pair of high sneakers and khaki trousers—an old wide brimmed felt hat, a pair of field glasses, a belt with about four pockets containing two clips of cartridges in each and my rifle.

That rifle is a very serious consideration, for chuck shooting, as I tried to imply in the intro-

duction, is a high art only equalled in North America by sheep and goat stalking and the latter has its limitations because of the comparative scarcity of *Ovis Canadensis* and the fact that we are limited to one or two a season at enormous expense, time and hardship. On woodchucks there is no bag limit or closed season, though I think there should be both.

But to get back to the rifle—flat trajectory is of primary importance. The chuck is a small mark—a big one being about the size of a house cat. Often only a part of it is showing and it is of no use shooting unless one hits him through the fore-shoulders or in the head and neck. Otherwise, even if his whole stomach is torn out or the rear end blown off by the explosive effect of a very high powered cartridge, he will often make his hole and fall in before expiring and unless you cut off his tail you can't check him up as a dead chuck by all the laws of the game. The .22 calibre rifle is therefore a very unsportsmanlike chuck gun because of its poor killing power and high trajectory. One is quite apt to misjudge the distance from such a small animal and a miscalculation of ten yards, if the range is over seventy-five yards, will cause a complete miss

with a twenty-two. Nothing less than a .25-20 high velocity should be considered and .25-35 or .250-3000 is better. In fact, I may cause a surprise by claiming that they are not only more efficient because of their extreme long range, accuracy, and flat trajectory, but they are much safer due to their light high-velocity bullets.

Where a .22 L.R. will glance off a rock and go whirring away over the hill for a mile or more, the .250-3000, the .25-35 or .256 projectile will go up in blue smoke on impact. Even the .25-20 high velocity will glance as will all of the larger medium-velocity cartridges with a speed of 2600 ft. per second at the muzzle or less. Therefore, the ultra high speed load is the safest as it will never glance on rock or hard ground. I honestly believe the safest load for woodchuck shooting in a settled district (and "chuck huntin' " is best in a settled district), is a .30-06 with the new Remington 110 grain load at a muzzle velocity of 3500 ft. per second. Of course, one cannot shoot indiscriminately on the sky line but even the .22 is unsafe for that purpose with a range of a mile. With the high power, however, where one shoots below the sky line into hillside or valley, he is perfectly safe.

It may seem absurd to the unsophisticated to suggest such a big gun in connection with such a little animal. A rifle which is used successfully on the largest game—but if the grizzly had the tenacity of life that the woodchuck has in equal ratio to his weight, we would not dare to hunt him at all. My favorite chuck rifle is a little 6¾ lbs. Mannlicher-Schoenauer with 18" barrel, calibre .256 with set trigger, a sling strap and a four-power Magnon scope.

This little rifle of the same calibre was and still is the favorite arm of some of the greatest elephant hunters in Africa including the late Carl Neuman but if the woodchuck was as big as an old African tusker and had the relative resistance to lead in his four thousand odd pounds of weight that he actually has in about ten or fifteen lbs., we would not go into action against him with anything short of a motorized battery of 7.5 m/m and an officer on the job who knew his stuff.

A scope on the woodchuck rifle is really indispensable; not only does it do away with the need of a pair of binoculars for spotting, but it is really better, as it can be held steadier after a hard climb and consequently is less strain on the eyes, and it makes possible shots at partly con-

cealed chucks at 100 yards or over which would be simply impossible with the finest iron sights as it would not be seen over them at all.

As your game is usually on the open side-hills it is the very finest of practice for stalking big game. A successful chuck shooter is the best potential sheep hunter that I can imagine. Consequently, his clothing should be inconspicuous so as to blend with the surroundings. Their eye sight is excellent which makes them an exception to most game, which does not notice much except movements; nor can you ignore the wind, for their noses are as keen as a buck deer's. Hunt down wind and every field you come to will be barren.

Let us suppose that you have your favorite rifle sighted point-blank for 100 yards and know to a fraction how high it shoots at two hundred and two hundred and fifty. Do not start too early for they do not come out until the sun is well up and has taken the morning chill from the air.

Start about seven-thirty or eight o'clock on a May morning, hunting up wind if possible or at least across it. Approach each field cautiously, examining it minutely with your glass, first the

mounds before their holes for a spying head, then along the edge of the walls. Always approach a wall silently and peep slowly over. There may be one feeding anywhere from ten feet to 100 yards from you on the other side. If you see one feeding and he presents a difficult shot either because of position or the height of the grass, wait until he sits up. He will do so to look about every few minutes. When sitting up he presents a mark which is much easier, for we are not so liable to under- or over-shoot. If he don't sit up soon enough whistle sharply. That will generally prompt him to do so.

If one is lying right at the edge of his hole, make sure of a head shot, otherwise he is almost certain to give one convulsive kick and flop in. Sometimes you will see a chuck lying in the mouth of his burrow just as he sees you. Generally he will very slowly draw in his head. If you conceal yourself and wait, he will invariably cautiously pep out again in a few minutes with just his eyes and ear showing. If the shot seems too hard and you remain still, he will climb up again a short while after. On the other hand, I never bother waiting for one to come out who has seen me first and runs to his hole. They invariably

remain down some time and it does not pay in a good chuck country. By a good chuck country I mean where one will average spotting about six chucks an hour and getting shots at four of them.

Don't pay so much attention to the fields as to the rock piles and stone walls after ten o'clock and before four, as they are usually resting and basking in the sun except for an odd one which may be feeding at any time.

Don't neglect a hole from which you have killed a chuck. They travel a great deal and a new tenant may move in any day to a desirable apartment. I have actually killed three in one day from one hole.

Another time I had an easy chance to drill three with one shot not over fifty yards from me and I am glad to say that though tempted to do so by the unique condition, I refrained.

In a good country where the woodchucks are plentiful, it is not uncommon to see three or four out at the same time in one field. If so, shoot and keep covered for if those you did not shoot at do not see you, they will probably run to the mouths of their burrows and sit there, for though wary, they are like all other animals, curious.

Above all, shoot carefully, make every shot tell and do not let one off until you are com-

fortable—having a fair mark and having steadied down if you were walking previously and are momentarily unsteady. This practice of self restraint will stand you in good stead later in the presence of more important game. A good shot should kill three out of four chucks—taking them as they come from 50 to 150 yards.

The best shots I ever made were one at one running using a telescope sight and shooting offhand at 105 yards, and one from the prone position at 300 measured yards and another at just a head showing at 168 yards shooting from the standing position off shoulder. But I have missed them more often. After one has killed a lot of the little fellows he will usually soften if he has the right spirit and give them more of a chance. I made a rule with myself several years ago which I religiously live up to, and I derive a great deal more from it as a result.

I never shoot at a chuck under any conditions under fifty yards but let him go for some other day. I never refuse any shot at any other range no matter how impossible it may be. If only an eye is showing at 100 yards I try for it and if a chuck is on a side-hill at 500 yards that I cannot get closer to because of the conditions, I try him anyway. Lastly, I shoot offhand without rest

at every chuck over the 50 yard safety zone and not over 100 from me—the prone position or a rest only being allowed at over 100 or over.

And I never kill more than six without returning to camp. If I got my six in the morning, I permit myself to go out again in the afternoon but six at a time is the limit. As a result I have an easy conscience and have become a far better judge of distance and can shoot steadier on my feet than I ever could before.

My best record is nine successive chucks in one day. Six in the morning and three more in the afternoon without a miss—all taken offhand with the Springfield using iron sights, no rest, and a strap hold, shortest 77 yards, longest 125 yards; and I think more of them than of any moose I ever brought down.

Treat the little chap fairly. Don't slaughter him. Despite all the twaddle used as an excuse by game hogs, they do but little harm and they are such an exceptionally good sporting proposition that they really deserve to be preserved rather than exterminated. I have a real friendly feeling for the little chap and long may he prosper and wax fat off the little he takes from the fields for the sport he provides in return.

CHAPTER XX

Squirrel and Rabbit Shooting

THE majority of sportsmen look down upon this lowly form of sport as something beneath their dignity, excellent for the young sportsman to begin with, but not worth serious consideration from those of experience.

Squirrel shooting is indeed of small account if one shoots them with a shotgun, but when they are properly hunted with a small bore rifle it is immediately elevated to a worthy position in our American hunting. There are few phases of our shooting which call for greater skill, or which will be found more atractive to the confirmed rifleman.

It is a fascinating sport, late in October, when the leaves are off the hardwoods, to slip quietly along a sunny ridge, rifle in hand, picking off a wary gray squirrel here and there. One has to use ears and eyes every moment, progressing from one point of vantage to another with utmost

care. The inexperienced man will get but few shots, for it is the trained eye that quickly perceives the ears and eyes of the squirrel projecting above a limb where he craftily watches you, and seeing it knows what it is, not a knot or projecting bit of bark. It is quite useless to hunt them until the leaves have fallen.

Now that chestnut trees are scarce the squirrel subsists principally on beech-nuts, acorns and hazels, and it is only on ridges where these are plentiful that one may expect good sport, or in the neighborhood of corn fields, for he is a great thief and steals a lot of fodder corn before it is time for husking, or the nuts are ready for harvesting. Then the squirrels will be busy storing them away for the winter. In the old days there was no place so likely for them as among the mighty chestnuts, which have almost entirely disappeared. Here and there in our rambles we see the withered skeleton of one of these splendid trees. They not only provided the squirrel with its chief sustenance in the winter, but homes as well in the holes among their gnarled branches. Squirrels have almost entirely disappeared in some sections with the chestnuts, and it is not generally known that they are great travelers

and frequently migrate in large bodies from one section to another.

A few years ago, gray squirrels almost entirely disappeared in Vermont. In 1923 they began to return, swimming the lower end of Lake Champlain in such numbers that the Vermont farmers along its East Shore, complained to the Commissioner, asking for permission to shoot them in protection of their crops which the hungry invaders were ruining. One man killed 160 odd in a few hours.

The best time to hunt squirrels is on a sharp frosty day when the sun is bright. Early in the morning they will be busily engaged in finding their breakfast, and if one moves quietly from place to place he has no difficulty in locating them by their noisy scuttering through the leaves. Every little while one should sit down with his back to a tree to watch and listen and then move on 100 yards or so to repeat the process, for usually you will be seen first. The successful squirrel hunter moves slowly. During the middle of the day they will lie up on some tree to rest and bask in the sun, usually close to the trunk, where they can get to leeward of the wind. Like all other forms of shooting, it is generally poorest

from eleven to three. Then they will again bestir themselves to find their supper.

Though for other forms of game the .22 calibre rifle is entirely too small, when loaded with a Long Rifle Cartridge and a hollow point bullet it is, because of its accuracy, mild report and cheapness, the ideal cartridge for squirrels, for with the hollow point bullet it is quite powerful enough. The rifle should be accurately sighted to hit point blank at 50 yards. The ideal gun to my mind is a single shot or bolt action repeater of good weight, not less than seven pounds equipped with a set trigger, sling strap and a four power telescopic sight. A lighter rifle does not promote steadiness, and to make a good score on squirrels one must be competent to place a shot through the head or fore-shoulders at 50 yards 9 times out of 10. Few successful shots will be made when they are running, and the telescope has a double purpose. They are, to begin with, a most uncertain mark due to high-lights and shadows in the woods. The telescope gives one a clear definition which is impossible with the finest of iron sights. It can also be used to locate them—without a telescope one needs field glasses with which to sweep the tree tops ahead

of him; if he trusts to his eyes alone, many of them will be overlooked.

It is a contemptible thing to take advantage of these gamey little animals with the shotgun, but if one gives them a fair chance with the rifle they are a worthy quarry.

Most of us begin our shooting days hunting cottontails and though many scorn it I have always been suspicious that it was a pose, for I must confess that there is an alluring fascination to rabbit hunting with a good pair of beagles that I cannot resist. Given a good country where they are plentiful, two or three frolicking companions, and an industrious brace of hounds, and I know of nothing that affords greater relaxation.

One often discovers that Brother Cottontail is a most disconcerting mark to many of those who scorn him. Rabbit shooting cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called hard. When one keeps cool and takes his shots easily there is not much excuse for a miss and yet, despite all seriousness in our efforts, we one and all will make the most outrageous misses at times, always to the delight of our companions.

Fortunately, rabbits are generally plentiful.

They are of the utmost importance to the sportsman whether he cares to hunt them or not, for there are many who do—a great many men from the cities and small towns. and even on the farms, who recognize that they are not good shots, and having no dogs, never hunt anything else. The rabbit bears the brunt of the shooting from one end of the country to the other. If it were not for rabbits, all the rest of our game would long since have been exterminated, so I take off my hat with all due respect to prolific bunny, not only for my earlier shooting at him; I am not ashamed to admit a fondness for him still.

One can hardly advise the sportsman where or how to hunt them. Rabbits are found in swamps and in the bottoms, in the hardwood on the ridges, and in the fields, in fact, everywhere that there is cover. Usually if the weather is clear, I prefer to hunt the fields and hedgerows, but if wet weather is expected, one will do well to forsake the fields and take to the scrubs and timber, where the rabbit, forseeing the change is sure to go. During the winter, when the weather is severe, the majority of them will be down in the swamps and where the black-berry bushes and greenbriars are the thickest.

If one is without a dog, he cannot do better than to travel along the hedgerows and criscrossing through the weed grown fields, investigating every clump of briars, but with good hounds, one can leave the starting of them to the dogs. Then when they give tongue on a hot trail, post yourself at a point of vantage and patiently wait, for in a few minutes, if they do not lose him or hole him up in a stone wall, or burrow, the rabbit is liable to come back. They will invariably circle, in fact all animals do in time when pursued. Sometimes in thick cover your hounds will bring a rabbit around three or four times before one of the party gets a successful shot at it.

I prefer a medium-load of No. 6 shot for rabbits, in a moderately light gun. A true cylinder right barrel, with a modified choke left, in a 6½ pound 12 bore with 28 inch barrels or even a 16 or 20 bore if one prefers, shooting an ounce of 6's is the thing. Don't forget to lead Mr. Bunny as he lopes by, at least his own length, and when he is stretched out doing his best in an open field ahead of your hounds, you will sometimes find that three or four lengths at forty yards, is not too much.

Of an entirely different order is the great

Northern hare or snowshoe rabbit. They are not only faster and greater rangers, but considerably harder to kill. Usually the snowshoe is not hunted until the snow is on the ground, and they have changed their brown summer coats for the snow white of winter. Fortunately, they never hole up as the rabbit does, due to their speed and ability to run long distances. It is quite impossible to hunt them successfully before the mountain swamps which they usually inhabit are frozen and the undergrowth beaten down by the frost. It is not at all unusual to have one of them carry the hounds far out of hearing, not circling back to their natural haunts for a couple of hours. When they do come it will be like the wind; the first warning will be the thud of their feet on one of their beaten paths in the snow. Running fast against the white snow of which they look a part except for the tips of their ears and their eyes, they make a difficult mark indeed. One usually does best to use fox hounds instead of beagles, and No. 4 shot propelled by a stiff load of powder. A full grown hare will weigh from seven to eight pounds.

More rabbits are missed by over-shooting than in any other way, because they are below the line

of sight. Unless Mr. Bunny is going straight away, it is best to hold just ahead of him and slightly under to overcome this tendency. Some of the charge is sure to glance from the ground and hit him if you are too far under for a direct hit, and it does not take many pellets to bowl him over.

CHAPTER XXI

Shooting Clothes

FINE feathers do not make fine birds, neither do they unmake them. Though I realize that we have a large class of shooters who believe a man must be unshaven, wear long hair, chew tobacco that runs down his chin and sport a dirty lousy shirt that a buck deer would smell a mile down wind, or he is not a sportsman, I find no substantiation of the theory, nor have I any respect for the galoot who lives up to it.

There is no game that I have participated in which cannot be played quite as well cleanly as otherwise, be it fishing, shooting or riding to hounds.

Shooting clothes for America may be divided into three classes, upland field shooting, big game hunting, and Wild-fowling, and in all three the two cardinal requisites are comfort and serviceability. These problems are easy. The best of duck shooting over the larger part of the United States is had in cold weather and

usually on the severest days. Consequently, the clothing must be strong, warm, and if possible waterproof. The combination is a difficult one to secure because waterproof clothes are usually cold. Therefore, it must comprise both heavy woolens and waterproof outer covering.

If for battery shooting on deep water, it should be slate gray in color, and for marsh or point shooting—dead grass or tan. Nothing can be worse than a yellow canvas coat in a gray battery. In fact, except for the occasional man who is walking up ducks, a shooting coat is the most unessential part of a wild-fowler's equipment. It is in the first place usually stiff and hard to shoot in. It is not capable of carrying the amount of shells which a man would want for a good day's duck shooting, without bearing down his shoulders so as to hamper his shots, and it is cold. Usually the duckshooter is pushed through a marsh in a boat, lying on a point in the grass, back of decoys, or sitting in a battery or floating blind. The only logical way to carry your shells under such conditions is in a galvanized tin, or preferably, a wooden box which is less noisy and of such size as to hold just one hundred shells.

We have not the time to go into all the details of possible variations to be used in duck shooting, but the simplest and best combination that will suit all conditions from the fifteenth of September to the first of February, when the battery season closes, shooting from the coast of Maine to North Carolina and west is: for battery shooting, a pair of felt lumberman's boots; for other forms of shooting, where one must wade in mud and water, a pair of roomy hip boots, large enough to allow two pairs of heavy socks to be worn and loose enough not to retard the circulation in the feet, a long pair of heavy, soft woolen trousers, a thick flannel shirt, a heavy sweater and one of the so-called "North Sea" suits, comprising a pair of water proof duck trousers, large and roomy, which can be tied at the ankles and at the waist with drawing strings, over which is used a smock of the same material or more correctly speaking, a "parka" such as the Eskimos wear with a drawing string at the waist and neck. This allows comfort and warmth. One can swing quickly to shoot in any direction.

No amount of rain, sleet, snow or spray can possibly wet him and when necessary, the hood

can be pulled monk-like over the shooting cap.

For the severest weather there is a woolen Parka exactly the same as the canvas one to be used inside it and with these two one can dispense with even a sweater during the coldest weather. Waterproof clothing, due to the proofing process, invariably shuts off evaporation, causing the moisture of the body to condense, dampening the underclothing instead of drying them, as a result of which one might as well be in a suit of tin cans, and one is as cold as if in an icebox. The Parka, being loose and roomy at the neck as well as at the waist, allows the free circulation of air which is necessary to warmth.

To this should be added a woolen cap of neutral color and heavy woolen gloves or preferably mitts, for it is impossible to shoot with any kind of a shooting glove on the trigger finger as well as one can without it, and the mitt can be speedily removed to take a shot. With this combination, should of course be worn woolen underwear. By removing the Parka and overalls, one is prepared for a warm day on still water in September, and equally qualified with the Parka and overalls for a cold blustery snowstorm or the sleet and rain

of January. There is no other combination I know of which doesn't entail a lot of extra incidentals for such occasions.

The worst thing to wear is a felt hat, being high in the crown it is noticeable in a blind and entirely out of place in a battery. True it protects the eyes from the sun and keeps water from running down the back of the neck which an ordinary cap really facilitates rather than hinders. It is for this reason that I have worn for many years the fore-and-after. The front peak is long enough to protect the eyes from the glaring sun, and the rear peak equally protects the back of the neck and head from the heaviest rain. When too severe for comfort otherwise, the side flaps can be tied under the chin to protect the face from the wet or to keep the ears warm. Such caps were extremely popular in this country and abroad for shooting a generation ago, but were usually produced in the most ridiculous combinations of colors.

Big Game Hunting

Winter comes early in the north woods and as a rule one encounters but little wet weather. Due to the nature of the hunting one is usually

in movement and doesn't require a great amount of clothing for comfort. The best combination is an old soft felt hat—a lumberman's cruising shirt or heavy makinaw, under which is worn a soft flannel shirt—a heavy pair of loose mackinaw trousers which are tucked into the extra heavy lumberman's socks coming to the knees. Inside of these should be worn a softer pair of thin woolen socks which it is a good plan to grease with castile soap on the heel to prevent chafing. More socks can be worn if necessary to fill the moccasin or shoepack which by the way should always be purchased with a heel. No greater mistake can be made by the average sportsman than to purchase a pair of single sole moccasins and many a fine trip has been spoiled thereby. The woodsman wearing them all his life has hardened his feet to an extent that the sportsman would not acquire in three months. The sportsman leaves his home in the land of smooth pavements and stiff-soled shoes, and goes into the woods prepared to hunt hard for two weeks and is crippled on the second day and hardly able to walk from stone bruises. They are sold to the tyro on the principle that they are quiet for hunting, whereas as a matter of fact the average

inexperienced man is just as quiet in a pair of ordinary walking shoes, as he is in moccasins, for he doesn't know how to be really quiet.

Nothing can be worse for the purpose than high cut moccasins or so-called lace hunting boots, against which briars and twigs slap as one walks through the brush. When a man is equipped with these he should wear his trousers on the outside to prevent the noise. My advice to the inexperienced big game hunter is to avoid all shoe packs which bruise the feet or afford no support to his arches, which are used to it, and without which it is almost impossible to secure a good fit for city bred feet, buying in place of them a pair of Munson last shoes, thoroughly soaking them with Neatsfoot oil for softness, and attach to the bottoms a pair of Phillips military soles of corrugated rubber. They are quiet and will not slip on rocks or fallen trees in the wettest, slipperest weather.

To this outfit will be added a pair of woolen mitts for severe weather and a heavy mackinaw jacket.

In the field one is up against a different situation. It requires usually easy clothing, in which he can shoot quickly and with comfort, and

briar proof if possible. During the early part of October, 1926, I spent two weeks grouse shooting in Vermont, where I experienced unusual conditions and almost total absence of briars of any variety, as a result of which on the first morning, being equipped with a high pair of boots and leather leggings, I was astounded to see that both my companions wore low shoes and woolen golf stockings. I said nothing, expecting to see them torn from their ankles before we returned, yet two days later I had fallen for the same equipment and never hunted under such comfortable conditions in regard to my feet before. This, however, through the Middle States, and from Connecticut and New York south to Florida, for field shooting is impossible. Blackberry and green briars in some places are almost impassable. The clothing can hardly be made strong enough to resist them. Nothing will under these conditions take the place of heavy duck or canvas.

The most essential thing next to the footwear is a properly fitting coat of medium-weight duck with many pockets, in which game and a large amount of shells can be carried, without discomfort. For several years I have used a Bur-

bury British shooting coat, which has the virtue of being comfortable, durable and attractive. No matter how well designed, the coat which is too large will sag from the shoulders, greatly tiring the wearer during a long jaunt. Shooting coats are usually bought in standard sizes, and if the purchaser selects one oversize to permit the use of sweaters and other heavy clothing, seldom needed a-field when walking, it is uncomfortable, ill-fitting, and he consequently resorts to shell vests or a shell belt to carry most of his ammunition, invariably cursing the rabbit which he shoots by chance and has to carry for the rest of the day.

Shell belts are a mistake. The ammunition cannot be got at quickly and they invariably make one hip sore on a hike. If one requires more than one box of shells, the ammunition vest is by all odds the best method for transportation, as it more generally distributes the weight and doesn't tire one as much. Breeches and leggings are of course durable and look the best, but if one be willing to reconcile himself to frayed trouser bottoms for the sake of ease and comfort, nothing will supplant a heavy pair of loose canvas slacks, reinforced on the knees, whereby leggings

or high boots can be dispensed with. These high lace boots so often sold to the shooter, are in my opinion the least satisfactory form of footwear for the bird shooter. They take a lot of time to lace up and are very much harder to dry out, and a bird hunter today is invariably floundering down into bottom grounds, swamps, etc., in quest of his birds, where he is certain to get his feet wet.

The Munson last shoe is comfortable and lighter, and if short breeches are adopted a pair of leather leggings may be added. Don't make the mistake of wasting money on canvas. I have yet to see any cloth leggings that would stand two or three days of real hard usage through the greater part of this briar infested country.

For the south, where partridge often lure one into rattle-snake infested lowlands, one can adopt the wire gauze lined canvas snake-proof legging, though the wearer of the heavy army type of pigskin puttee is about as well protected. Even in the late winter many extremely hot days will be encountered in the south, at which time a light weight gunning coat, under which is worn the usual flannel shirt, will prove a blessing. An old pair of kid gloves with the fingers cut off is

also an indispensable comfort in a briary country, protecting as they do the back of the hand, yet leaving free the use of the fingers.

Western shooting is distinct. A man invariably spends a great part of his time on horseback, yet when afoot has some of the hardest kind of climbing and footwork to perform. For general use nothing can quite take the place of the high laced miner's boot despite what was said about it for bird shooting. Not only must one climb on foot at high altitude over the roughest kind of country for some species of game, but he must often make a long jaunt in the morning to round up pack and saddle horses which have strayed away from camp—sometimes in the snow or wading small streams. Nevertheless, despite the stout high boots, adapted for general use and their comfort when riding, their should be some special lighter rig for which they will be discarded for the business of climbing after sheep and goats, when every ounce counts.

Western shooting requires a fairly broad-brimmed felt hat to protect the eyes from the sun—heavy woolen underwear, for the nights are intensely cold, flannel outing shirts and heavy woolen or corduroy riding breeches. High laced

boots of the miner's type, a mackinaw saddle coat and slicker. A buckskin or wind-proof vest as worn by cow-punchers is indispensable for a lot of the hard work around camp and is valuable in riding.

Chaps are so comfortable to ride in, particularly in cold, wet or rainy weather, that they are almost indispensable, but get plain leather ones. Your guide will in nine cases out of ten wear heavy blue jean overalls. If he wears Angora chaps, be suspicious—he is probably used to guiding dudes in the summer who expect them. The riding overall of the West does every duty of the chap effectively, and does it much cheaper, except when it rains. It is equally unnecessary to wear a Stetson hat with an eight inch brim and a nine inch crown. Every time you want to look over a rock or crag you have to take your hat off, or the animal on the other side thinks you are raising a circus tent and sees you first.

You don't need silver Mex spurs with four inch rowls. You are not going to bust horses. Anyhow, you are not going to try it on an expensive shooting trip if God gave you any common sense. A sprained wrist will ruin everything. You don't need leather cuffs. They are

pretty, but you are not out to punch cows or brand cattle, where they might be serviceable, and if to be romantic you simply must wear a six shooter of large calibre, for the luv' a' Mike, sling it from a shoulder holster. Don't wear it on a double gun belt hanging low over the right hip, reaching almost to your knees. They batter on the rocks, hamper your stride in walking, send you home tired and with sore hips. Remember the puncher whom you see so artistically wearing such a gun in the pictures both painted and written by our best artists is a plainsman, usually riding a broncho, if he wanted to go one hundred yards to fetch a package of cigarettes. He simply doesn't hunt that way and the puncher was seldom a sheep and goat hunter. He usually stayed out of the high hills.

The mountain cattle man who you will note usually rides with shorter stirrups, incidentally wears his gun considerably higher when he wears one. This is a different game.

Speaking of six gun belts draws to mind that the cartridge belt is the most impractical way of carrying ammunition. I know this is an old American custom that I am deriding, but it is none the less true. Cartridges left in leather

belts invariably corrode in a short time. When we want to use them in a hurry, we find that they jam in the chamber or in the magazine, and the worst place to carry a lot of heavy ammunition for the man that has to walk part of the time is on a belt around the hips.

The Boers do it much better by putting a bandolier over the shoulders and incidentally, it is not a belt such as ours, but a clip belt holding clips of five Mauser cartridges. The most up-to-date rifles use clip ammunition. Consequently all a man needs is an extra clip in each breast pocket of his shirt or vest. If he wants more he can put a package of twenty in each pocket. He can open the packages quick enough if he needs the extra ammunition. It is very seldom he has an opportunity to open an extra package.

I would permit gaudy silk handkerchiefs for the neck and even artistic hat bands. They are harmless and not excessive weight.

For the man who really wants to be unwestern and yet practical, nothing is better than to wear a good stout pair of corduroy riding breeches, a pair of Munson last shoes with Phillips soles on the bottom which will hold on any rocks and make less noise than steel calks, and protect his

legs with woolen spiral puttees. They are equally good for climbing and riding, and they have the virtue of offering a splendid bandage for any kind of an injury such as might occur in a mountainous country—broken bones, sprains, or dislocations.

I appreciate that one of the greatest pleasures to be had from a shooting trip is in anticipation and preparation. Many a man has a lot more fun in buying equipment than he does in using it. There is an awful lot of junk carried into the woods under the title of essentials and there will be more of it to come. Practical experience will tell you what to take and what not to take, and remember, if a man tells you that such a thing in indispensable in his part of the country, seriously consider his advice even though you think he is crazy. North America is a pretty big place and conditions vary.

I have found, however, that the best plan under any conditions is to go as light as possible. That means if you can afford it, to take your gun and 100 rounds of ammunition in one hand—a toilet kit, sweater, heavy underwear and flannel shirts that you know are necessary in the other, put your license in your pocket and start and you can

rest assured that anything else that you require which is absolutely essential you can get at the store nearest to where your guide lives. If you cannot get it there you can bank on it that it is unessential, and unessential things are a burden. Most people work on the principle in forming camping equipment, "when in doubt, take it with you." When in doubt, leave it home. It is surprising what a lot of junk you can get along without.

CHAPTER XXII

Leading on Crossing Shots

A CORRESPONDENT recently inquired, "How far should one lead a mallard flying at right angle to the gun at a range of sixty yards, to insure a hit, using a twelve-bore gun loaded with 3½ drams of Smokeless and 1⅛ ounces of No. 5 shot?" Not that there is anything unusual in this query—I am asked the same question with variations at frequent intervals—but it is nevertheless one of the most difficult to answer, and in my writings for "Field and Stream" for the past ten years I have studiously avoided it as much as possible.

In fact, though it can be answered scientifically from a mathematical standpoint, founded upon facts, the result is of no practical value to anyone. In the past and present all kinds of tables have been worked out to aid the young sportsman, and there is not the slightest doubt in my mind but what they one and all have led to more unaccountable misses than hits. The "young idea"

would have invariably done better if he had approached his shots with an unbiased mind, and solved his problems as they rose, by a practical application of his own deductions.

As an illustration let us, with the aid of the latest ballistic data, work out the problem offered above. A mallard is rated as flying at an average speed of 51 miles an hour, which is equivalent to 75 feet per second. The load mentioned is a fast one, having a muzzle velocity of 1350 feet per second and a remaining velocity at sixty yards of 506 feet per second. The time of flight over sixty yards is consequently .237 second—roughly a quarter of a second—in which time the duck has flown a distance of 18 feet, or, if you will have it exact, 19.77 feet.

So, with a stationary gun if one led the bird that amount at the moment the charge left the muzzle, he would score a hit, but to put it bluntly, who-in-'ell is going to estimate accurately 19.77 feet, sixty yards away, and at the same time correctly align the gun upon the rapidly moving object from which he is measuring? It can't be done.

Without going any further, the scientific answer seems to fail; nevertheless, to convince our-

selves let us delve into the matter from a different angle. Uncertain conditions of light tend to distort the range. The faint light of early morning or dusk make the birds appear more distant than they are. Snow or lack of sunlight have the same effect, while a bright sun makes them appear much nearer than they are. A bird flying close to the water is the most accurately judged if one is standing up, but very difficult when one is crouching in a blind or lying in a battery so that the intervening space is partly cut from view. A high overhead bird is frequently estimated to be much farther away than it actually is—due to the fact that it is clear against the sky and there is nothing by which to judge, even the old-timer will pass up many such shots if he does not constantly watch himself.

More important is the fact that not one bird in a hundred is passing at ninety degrees to the shooter. In almost every case it is rising and flying at an angle which is either increasing or decreasing its range rapidly while you aim, so the lead, even if accurately estimated, which I have tried to show is almost impossible, is not stable but constantly changing.

The majority of shooters do not always use

the same load (this is unfortunate; they should do so to attain the best results, as they vary so much in velocity), but the man who does so is the exception. Also, in the course of a day we usually shoot at several varieties of fowl, some of which fly faster than others, and their varying size tends to misjudgment as to range. One bird is aware of your presence and scared into its best efforts, another passes unconcernedly at moderate speed, which in a duck is usually fast enough for all comfort. Take as an illustration the canvas-back, with an average speed of 99 miles an hour. This means 145 feet per second. It would cover 34 feet in the time which it took the shot charge to reach him at sixty yards—14 feet more than the mallard flew in the same time, all of which shows why we miss so many birds over forty yards from the gun. Wouldn't you be ashamed if you knew that you had missed a bird by 14 feet?

Most important of all is the personal factor, one man has a slow eye, another swings slowly, while a third swings the gun into line and aims quickly, but pulls the trigger so slowly that he loses most of the allowance which he has made. There are a host of variations, and, of course, it goes without saying that he who is most perfectly

tuned, whose eye, brain and muscles work in the closest harmony, should with practice make the best shot.

In all I have given five fundamental reasons, or shall we say excuses, for missing. Inability to judge speed of flight, miscalculation of range, variation in the velocity of different loads, misjudging angle of flight, and the unaccountable personal factor. Some aggregation to stack up against and still hit a flying bird at all.

It has been shown that to connect with a bird in flight it is absolutely necessary to lead, at all but the shortest range, to overcome the time of flight of the charge and the time consumed between the action of the brain and the ignition of the charge. There are good shots that insist they do not lead at all, but though honest in their opinions they do not know what they are talking about. A lead is imperative as we cannot place the charge instantaneously upon the target. Were we to attempt to kill birds by use of a scientific chart of allowances and a stationary gun, the best shot in the country could not hit one bird in twenty due to errors in calculation. Hence the man who stops his gun at the moment he pulls the trigger cannot ever become a good flight shot; no matter

how keen his judgment of distance and speed of flight may be, his calculation will usually be off sufficiently to cause a miss.

There is only one thing which makes consistent kills possible—swinging the gun in accurate alignment with the line of flight until after the charge has left the barrel, because this reduces the personal factor to a minimum.

It has been admitted that the time consumed in sighting, and for the trigger finger to act upon receiving the command from the brain, as well as the speed of the swing varies in each individual; indeed it is not constant in any one individual.

Obviously, if the proper allowance were always made and the gun kept moving until after the charge had left the muzzle, the personal factor would be eliminated, be the tendency fast or slow. There would then be no foundation for the oft-quoted advice that so-and-so requires a lighter gun or an easier pull, as he is shooting behind his birds. What would be the difference whether one took 3/100 or 6/100 of a second to accomplish the combustion of the charge? But this is working back to the hypothesis of a stationary gun and correct allowance, which is obviously impossible. Science cannot overcome our proclivities

to error. We do miscalculate speed and range, but as we reduce the necessary lead we reduce proportionately the possibility of error, hence it behooves us to take advantage of everything which will minimize our guess work. Think quickly, aim quickly, swing quickly, adopt a light trigger pull (so long as it is safe) which will hasten your release and eliminate the extra allowance necessitated by a slow let-off. I do not mean that one should hurry. The old adage, "the more haste the less speed," was never more true than in shooting. Bring up the gun behind the bird and race the muzzle past him, or better yet, swing the gun up onto the bird and race past him in line with his flight, and without dwelling upon the aim or pull, or stopping the gun, let off at him while in full swing and *follow through*. It must not be inferred that one should make a long swing, which is a most common fault. The gun should be brought from the ready position to the firing alignment with a minimum of movement. Swing must always be present, but not a prolonged swing of sufficient duration to last beyond the period necessary for a quick shot; otherwise it may spoil the alignment, endanger a companion and will always slow up the second shot. One

thing above all, remember the faster the swing the less lead is required, for the fast swinging muzzle gains more in the race with the bird than the slow swing in the time required for the brain to act, and the ignition of the charge. By so doing you are placing the shot out where the bird will be by the time the charge has covered the sixty yards. You will have cut to a minimum the allowance required, except that consumed by the charge in flight.

If you stop to think of it, you will discover that lead once established is partly automatic; in other words, it to some extent takes care of itself. The line of sight down the barrel (when we lead) is at an angle to the direct line of vision, thus forming two sides of a triangle, and the angle of their deviation is constant, so that the base (or lead) is increased in proportion to the length of the two sides. Hence, if a certain amount of daylight between the muzzle and the bird made an allowance of three feet at twenty yards, the same allowance would lead by six feet at forty yards and nine feet at sixty. This is of utmost importance, for in consequence if we underestimate the range (and our errors are generally in that direction) our mistake is automatically corrected to some ex-

tent. It must not be inferred from this that so long as we make a certain allowance at twenty yards that the same lead would suffice for a greater range, but it does mean that we do not have to hold an apparent 19.77 feet in front of a passing mallard at sixty yards' range to connect, if we are racing the gun past him at the time of discharge.

Nor has the lead to be exact by any means. If the shot charge reached the mark simultaneously or in a flat sheet, this would be true, but in reality it is strung out. The approximate distance between the first and last pellet in the charge from a full-choked weapon is about twenty-seven feet; a lot of this is defective shot that would not kill, but ninety-five per cent of the charge is spread out in a column nineteen feet long at sixty yards' range, the first ten feet of which is the most effective part, the advantage of which is, of course, apparent.

It is common for the old-timer in response to the inquiry, "How far should I lead this bird?" to say so many feet. This is really very vague advice, for two men's opinion of what actually corresponded to so many feet at a given range will vary to a marked degree. It is better to say

so many lengths, having in mind the size of the bird. In fact, it is better for one to think in lengths when aiming at passing birds. It is this vagueness as to just what the old-timer means in speaking of range that adds to the confusion of the novice. One party says, "I don't lead at all," which is obviously false, though he believes it. Another says, "I lead a bird at forty yards, four feet," and he may be an equally good shot. Does he mean that he actually led four feet, which at forty yards' range would not call for very much daylight between his muzzle and the duck's bill, or did he fire with his muzzle at what appeared like four feet in front of the bill? If he did the latter, his lead on the bird at forty yards' range was enormous. It is simply impossible to gauge correctly the other fellow's lead by his description of it, as you cannot see with his eyes; and I believe that in most cases where the old-timer means the former that the novice thinks he means the latter.

Consequently, I believe many young shooters, by following the old-timer's advice, that you can't lead a passing bird too much, are shooting away out in front of their game. I know that for years when baymen were saying, "Ha! ha!

You shot behind that one," I was actually too far ahead of it, and in a vain attempt to get, as I thought, ahead, I was in consequence shooting thirty yards and more in front of my birds. Not that I am really sorry, for now that I have learned my mistake, fast-flying ducks do not bother me as they do some of my companions. As I have said before, there was a time when I believed it would be ever impossible for me to learn to kill wild-fowl; today they are easier than any form of shooting, and when I miss it is still because I am ahead rather than behind them.

On the other hand, I do not entirely agree with the popular idea in regard to the drop and pitch of the stock. When I was a boy, the average American gun-stock did undoubtedly have too much drop, the bend usually being from three to three and a quarter inches. Then pigeon shooting gained in popularity, and extremely straight stocks became the fashion, and were carried to unreasonable extremes. As a result, the average gun sold today is entirely too straight for all-around use, being from two and a quarter inches to two and a half inches, while it would suit the average man better if two and a half to two and three quarter inches. Already the reaction has

set in and the more rational stocks are coming into their own.

Admittedly a sportsman can shoot a straighter gun more comfortably in the field than he can from a cramped position in a battery or a blind. Personally I shoot a gun with a full three-eighths more drop for ducks than I do in the field. We must not forget that conditions vary. If my duck shooting was done from a pass where I was standing on my feet with full control of my body, I could easily shoot a duck gun as straight as my field gun; as it is, the bent stock is an enormous advantage. We cannot make arbitrary statements to meet varying conditions, and varying personalities. Trapshooting also made the long toe popular, but it is an abomination on a duck gun and to me on a game gun. There are, despite popular opinion, just as many sportsmen overshooting their game as there are undershooting them. Such men do not want a high-pitched gun, and to substantiate this statement the Parker Company has just reduced the length of the toe on the stocks of their ready-made guns.

To get back to our subject. No one can go by another man's lead. There are equally good wildfowlers who take long leads and short ones. It

depends upon how fast they swing and pull the trigger. It is simply a case of learning one's personal requirements. It is impossible to go by what the other fellow does. No one can tell how far he is leading by his description; though he may have it firmly impressed upon his own mind, he cannot literally translate a picture of it to you. And, if he could, it would not be likely to fit in with your controlling personal factors. Each of us must work out his own problem. Forget what the other fellow does. If I have impressed this one fact upon the beginner's mind, this article is worth while.

Learn to swing fast, *never* stopping the gun, but shooting as the muzzle races past the bird; pull the trigger quickly and remember the lead with which you kill your game. Make a mental note of the lead in lengths as compared to the size of the bird, for no other measurement is accurate, and do not forget that while lead is absolutely essential, that a lead of 19.77 feet, while it looks big upon paper, is very small at sixty yards. One more illustration: the average upland bird flies about forty miles an hour; if forty yards away it will have flown approximately ten feet six inches in the time elapsed between the action

of your brain and the arrival of the shot. Therefore, if your gun was swinging with the line of flight at the time of discharge, the muzzle of the barrel would have to be some three inches in front of its bill to insure a hit. Try it; set up two stakes at forty yards, fasten a ruler at the muzzle of your gun and move the stakes apart until as you sight on one the other is three inches away on the ruler—then measure the distance between the stakes.

This will show that it is easy to shoot too far ahead if you are laboring under the ancient belief that it cannot be done, but remember that unless you keep the gun moving you can never tell where you are shooting.

CHAPTER XXIII

Shooting Positions with the Rifle

IN my criticisms of target shooting, I have tried to bring out clearly the fact that target shooting at regulation white targets with black bull's eyes at known ranges is really a game by itself and only the preliminary stage of rifle shooting for big game. After we have acquired moderate skill and familiarized ourselves with the trajectory of our cartridges at various ranges, the pull of the trigger, the balance and hang of the gun for a quick shot and the proper and smooth manipulation of the bolt or lever off shoulder, we have gone far enough with target shooting.

The average sportsman of experience will beat the average guide, who drags him through the woods, all to pieces at target shooting. It is the game he has practiced most and the guide has practiced least. But how woefully the same sportsman usually falls down when it comes to connecting with a vanishing white flag, as a buck flits off like a will-o'-the-wisp seen here, now

there, as he gets dimmer with distance through the timber.

Most of the big game killed by sportsmen is standing when shot at and usually these shots are easy. Even a two-thirds concealed deer affords a large mark when standing quietly looking at you at 100 yards, as compared to the regulation four-inch bull which you practice on at the same range.

I have heard military riflemen of experience speak with pride of killing a moose on a dead water at 300 yards. I bragged of one at 225 under ideal conditions, until I woke up and got hep to myself. Holy smoke! why should I? The mark is some forty inches square from withers to brisket and a .30-06 bullet anywhere in that shoulder area won't let him travel far. Elevation doesn't count. The 180-grain bullet only drops some nine inches at 300 yards. Shoot at the sharply defined line of his back and your bullet drops into the right place. Easy? Perfectly easy. Judging by our target shooting bull's eye ability, it's a cinch. Well, it isn't—try and do it!

There are several flies in the jam pot, all of which show that the target shooting method is

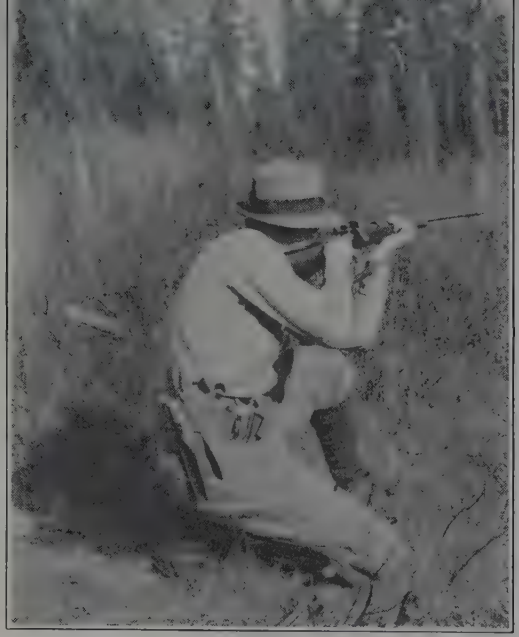
the bunk from the game shooter's standpoint. To begin with, your game is generally seen when traveling through swamps in soft ground, climbing windfalls, ducking under limbs and mounting steep little ridges, where you slip and stumble now and then, that last above all others the most promiscuous cause of shaking nerves.

Would you lie down and shoot at the target after such a jaunt? No, you would not, (you would if you were sensible) but you are too wise and know better and your pride would not stand the results.

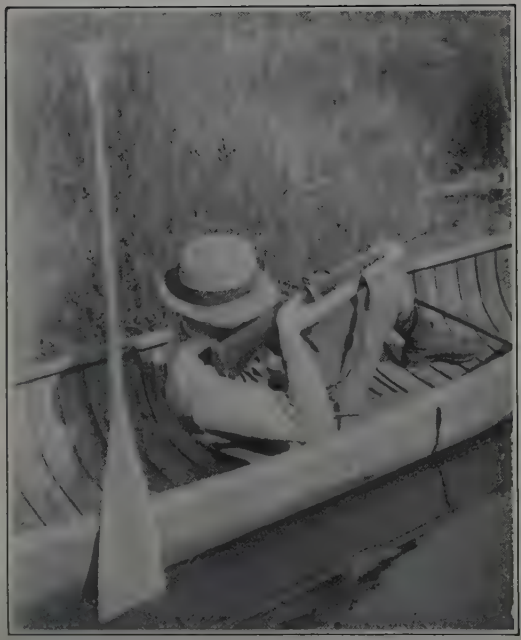
That's where your guide has it on you above all else. He is in better physical shape as a rule. He is used to mountain climbing or timber cruising as the case may be, and his wind is not bothered as yours is by the unusual exercise.

Then too, you are over-anxious. To him it's an old story—the deer you just jumped is the first you have seen this year, maybe the first in five years, maybe the first ever, only we were considering the difficulty of the average riflemen of some experience rather than the novice. So your old heart goes pit-a-pat. The extreme of this is buck fever when your wind is up and your anxiety thoroughly demoralizes you. Buck fever

THE TREE SUPPORT SHOT—A SURE ONE



CORRECT KNEELING POSITION BUT THE LEAST SATISFACTORY



Some say it is hard to shoot from a canoe—try this

The best of all positions for the game shot

is not produced as some seem to think, by fear. It is simply a lack of confidence in your ability to make good at the critical moment. Fear that the game will get away.

A milder form of this is shown in lack of control, inability to wait for a slowly feeding animal to move into clearer view for a sure shot—impatience, which causes you to hazard a shot anyway, though you are not sure that a vital part is in front of your sight, covered by that damned hackmatack. Shooting off balance with insecure footing, where the body is held tense or prone at the wrong angle to the game which has changed its position since you lay down, or with a sharp rock or snag boring into some part of your anatomy—these things cause inexcusable misses on large marks at moderate range, together with miscalculation of range.

The commonest shot and the most uncertain is, of course, standing off-hand. Except when game is jumped ahead of us it is seldom necessary to shoot thus unassisted. In the forest one can invariably use the tree hold to be described later, whereas in the open country the still better sitting or prone position can almost always be accepted. The point is most men are not acquainted with

these less used positions and through lack of familiarity seldom think of them.

In shooting off-shoulder on your "hind" feet, it is as imperative to take the necessary time for proper stance as in any other position. In fact, I would go further and say: more so. Don't try to snap with a rifle with the body in an awkward, unbalanced position. If there is an intervening branch or a tree in your way as there usually is, step quickly around it—don't try to coil around in front like a snake.

Plant your feet firmly, raise the rifle easily, bringing your sights up in line with the eye. Don't, like a trapshooter, pull your head down to the sights. The left arm should be easily extended, gripping the forehand stock in the center, and the elbow should be directly below the center of the barrel, the right elbow should be at right angle to the body or pointed directly out from the shoulder to prevent canting the sights over to one side, and the swing of the rifle should come from the waist not from the arms. When the deer is almost into your sights, pull. The Lyman Gun Sight Company trade-mark describes the proper view through the sight better than a book on the subject could. It takes time,

but necessary time. One may lose a few shots, but he will kill more by getting set in the long run. Games of chance have made few fortunes, chance shots have made few kills.

The next least satisfactory shot is the kneeling position. It is but little steadier than off-hand and not nearly so secure as any of those to follow. It has the disadvantage of being generally a poor one in cover, as it carries your line of sight low where the undergrowth is thickest. Its only real advantage is that it is unquestionably the fastest of the rest-holds to fall into.

Examination of the illustration will show that the shooter is sitting down on his right heel. Some men cannot get their buttocks on their heel. If so, they should never attempt this position as it is not otherwise steady. The shooter should sit down on the right heel, the left foot and the right knee should be at right angles and the body should be thrown forward from the waist so that the left elbow will project beyond the left knee cap on which it rests. If you are not supple enough to do it right, give it up. Even the army does not recommend it.

A better way is the sitting position, using a strap hold. It has also the disadvantage in cover

of carrying the line of sight low, but it is very steady and can be used readily on dead waters and barrens. It is the best of all for down hill shots and for mountain use. Generally the heels are braced in the ground if possible, to prevent slipping, and on elbow is rested on each knee. The body is turned slightly to the right of the target so the rifle is carried party across the breast.

Shooting in a wooded country, nothing is more desirable than a tree hold even if only a slender sapling. The Tyrolean Chamoix hunter, than whom there is no better rifle shot, uses his Alpinstock in the same manner, only he sits down, drives its sharp steel ferrule into the ground and grasps it at the desired elevation in the grip of his left hand, with the rifle forehand resting on his knuckles or extended thumb.

Using a stout fir as I am seen doing in the illustration, the hand is just rested, palm out against the tree, and the weight of the body thrown forward against it. The rifle barrel is merely rested upon the thumb. It should not be held fast against the bole of the tree, as this is liable to cause it to shoot away from the pressure, due to the vibration, sufficiently to cause a miss

at normal game ranges. This is to me, bar none, the best of all game positions to adopt and the most often available in the woodlands for long shots at quiet or slowly moving targets.

Many people consider it hard to shoot from a canoe. It is certainly the most unsteady thing imaginable if one does not know how to do so properly and few do, even guides. The method illustrated is so perfect that I consider it superior to the prone position for both comfort and steadiness, and so far as I am concerned, I discovered it for myself. I never knew a guide who had seen it used before.

The body is as low as possible in the canoe, resting principally on the right thigh and right buttock. The legs are stretched apart so that the knees are pressed firmly against the sides. The back is resting against the spreader with the right elbow on the ground at that side of the craft, and left arm is fully extended, grasping the barrel well out toward the muzzle, the wrist and forearm resting upon the left thigh and knee. Elevation or deflection is secured by raising or lowering the knee by moving the leg forward or back; with the canoe drawn up to shore in the proper direction, one can command a whole dead

water or small lake from the fixed position with but little lateral movement. It is really quite similar in application to the old back position used in England for deer stalking and target shooting. Yet to shoot from a bolt upright sitting position in a canoe is the most unbalanced and uncertain method I can imagine.

The illustration opposite page 38 shows another position from the canoe which is good for one shot from shore or when the guide is steadying the canoe, but is not recommended when one is out in a lake alone with a heavy rifle. Under those conditions, one is liable to be suddenly stood upon his left ear in several feet of very cold and excessively wet water. But I made one very good shot that way on the famous dead water where the pictures were posed. After all, from a canoe it is usually only the first shot that counts.

In conclusion I would add but a few more remarks. No matter what position you adopt, get comfortable before you shoot. A cramped position is to invite a miss, and be sure you are on the target and steady down before you release the trigger. The report of the rifle never has

been known to kill a deer. Apparently they never have heart failure.

And don't be tied down by some old-fashioned idea of shooting on your "hind" feet without assistance when it is handy, as our grandfathers are supposed to have done with their old guns. Our game or what's left of it has had a post graduate course in self-protection. It's a hell of a sight harder to bring home the bacon than it was in Daniel Boone's time. Also your mark is a life which you are trying to take. Don't needlessly wound when with care from a steady rest you can be sure of a quick kill without needless suffering. What is left of our large game is too valuable to take chances with.

The accompanying illustrations for this chapter were taken whilst in the heart of the New Brunswick moose country. Many heads of record proportion have been brought out of the famous dead water illustrated.

CHAPTER XXIV

What of the Future?

WHAT I wish to say here does not come easily. I have written upon shooting topics for eighteen years, during which time I have endeavored to give the best advice of which I was capable, and tonight as I prepare to finish this book, after a gruelling, discouraging day afield, I am sitting down in sackcloth and ashes to make my confession, and to indict other sporting pen-pushers who are infinitely more guilty because of their greater skill. Some of them have a great deal more to account for than I confess to, for they write with a charm that I could never equal. What visions they conjure in the minds of sportsmen of days afield! Their gifted pens create happy hunting grounds such as the Red Man going down the last trail from his wigwam to meet his *Manitou* must have known awaited him beyond the setting sun.

Surely I may claim some tolerance for my semi-technical dissertation on sporting gunnery,

for I seldom aspired to the idealistic style of these arch-romanticists, who write so glowingly of the past shooting as if it were the reality of today, grievously deluding the young idea and setting a goal for him that he can seldom attain in field or covert. And I for one mean to make a clean breast of the whole thing, and speak the truth.

What I wish to bring home in cold, brutal honesty is that despite their attractiveness, most of the good stories which we read are of the unusual shoot. They do not truthfully depict the every-day experience of the sportsman, but usually the red-letter days of experts. Others of their kind appreciate this, but the rank and file, consisting of the less experienced, the young boy or the man from other parts, accept them as typical of more general conditions. Worse yet, many writers, following the style of some splendid old sporting authority, unconsciously write of shooting as it was in the memory of many still living rather than as it exists.

Frank Forrister, the later Sandy, and other writers of the 70's had game to shoot—lots of it! Today most of us get but a meagre sample of the remnants.

Anyone who knows how to write realizes that

it is impossible to stick to an actual sequence of events and produce an attractive story, and so they garnish their narratives with glowing color, writing of the present as it was in Daddy's day.

Dickens wrote of low life and sorrow, yet became famous. What we need is a sporting Dickens, one who understands all our vivid hopes and embittering disappointments, one who can pull our very heart strings but incidentally spur us on to better conditions.

You may not realize it, but all these stories about good shooting subconsciously instill in us the idea that if you had poor shooting—"that's just your luck"—but other fellows are getting plenty of game, and we sit back and do nothing for the future. Let's have no more hard-luck stories. Misery loves company, why not write a few good ones of the common unlucky days, when we did not kill a danged thing—we all know that phase of the game by heart. Wouldn't read 'em, you say? Yes they would. Look at the people who pay $4.00 to sit in a theatre and have a good cry over a sad show. And in America the shooting today, taking it as a whole, is a sad show.

All our sporting story-tellers are Thackerays

—writing of the high spots. It's all right for the oldsters who, gouty, grouchy and short of breath, sit back and do most of their shooting beside the fire. They read one of these idealistic eulogies of sporting days and say to themselves Ah, yes! That's good! Used to be so! Belike visions come before their eyes of days in the cow peas when the coat pocket bulged with partridge, of a dusky puncher staggering up from the marsh under a back load of mallards, to deposit them on the club house porch and go back for the rest, all brought down with the old gun in the corner.

But the young fellow, he reads and says "Gee, Buck, let's go tomorrow." For what? A red-letter day? Well, maybe, if he is lucky. They do happen. More than likely he works like a dray horse for a couple of birds and tries to think that he had good shooting, consoling himself with the thread-bare adage that the bag doesn't count; good sportsmen don't gauge the day by the weight of the bag; the sport is the thing, getting out under God's blue sky, listening to the whispered message of the wind in the sedge grass, glorying in the anatomical patch work of Jack Frost in the forest.

That's it! We are beginning to know sport in

a true sense—we moderns! Stuff and nonsense!

Right here I want to say that the writer is gauging his sport more each year by the size of the bag—not because of its weight but because of its meagreness. Call me a game hog!

I like to hear the whisper of the wind, but I would rather hear a whisper of wings over head. I love to roam through sylvan dells, but I don't need a gun to do that, and there are a lot of cheaper ways to enjoy it than by long distance railroad fares and non-resident license fees at $25.00 per.

We don't want a back load of game, just a reasonable chance of a fair bag, which most of us don't get. I am not speaking of certain localities which are not shot out. I know the ducking to be had on Currituck, the Mississippi Delta, etc.; I know the good shooting to be had in parts of Georgia and Texas; I know also the glorious game fields of Canada, but I am speaking of the States as a whole. Most of us are not being repaid. Are you? Don't delude yourself, don't say you are satisfied with four or five ducks when the law says you may take twenty-five—but you can't get them once in ten or twenty attempts. Be honest with yourself.

We want well filled game bags when we go shooting. The health and outdoor exercise is all right, but results count. We don't carry a gun for a foot race. The exercise is incidental to our purpose. Uncertainty adds to the charm of all sport. We should expect poor sport once in a while, but the good luck which we hope for is now more often the exception, and our shooting costs us more each year. As far as I can figure, a sportsman stands a twenty-to-one chance of a red-letter day. In other words, the average man who hunts possibly two weeks per season, and is entitled to as many red-letter days as he can get, will probably have one in two years, and maybe less if he is unlucky.

By a red-letter day I don't mean fifteen ducks, when the law says you can kill twenty-five, nor do I mean killing four grouse and sneaking them home, when the law says you can take two—laws are to be obeyed—nor do I mean three or four woodcock. That's no shooting, it's incidental to a long, hard day's tramp afield. I mean twelve quail or fifteen snipe or twenty-five ducks or eight geese, where the law allows that many, and nothing less can be constituted a red-letter day's shooting.

The indiscriminate slaughter of game disgusts any man of feeling. We don't want our pictures taken with a buck board full of prairie chickens, or a skiff load of ducks, as was once the style. That is one of the reasons why we have so little to shoot; but there is a happy medium between what we do get and what our daddies used to get which we should be able to obtain.

I believe my case can be taken as an example of the poor luck of the modern American shooter of the East. I am not a wonderful shot, but perhaps I make up for some deficiency as a wing shot by a little more enthusiasm and incentive to work hard, plus better opportunities—thanks to the generosity of splendid sportsmen all over the country who invite me to join them. Usually I am one of the high guns in the party of which I am a member, not because I miss less but because I get more chances to shoot by ranging wider and covering more ground. Likewise I take every chance afforded without regard for the expenditure of shells.

Consulting my game register I find that in the season of 1923 which I devoted entirely to small game, I had in all, from the first of September to the first of February, forty-five days shooting.

I had one red-letter day on rail-bird and reed, killing fifty rail and thirty-eight reed; that is, if rail and reed-bird shooting under any conditions could be called a red-letter day.

I spent two weeks in a splendid grouse country as a guest of the Game Commissioner of Vermont. I had one limit on grouse in ten days shooting, and grouse were not supposed to be nearly as scarce that season as they have been ever since. I had one bag limit of woodcock, consisting of four birds.

In Maryland later I on several occasions killed eight or nine quail, but never secured my limit of twelve.

Duck shooting was generally good all along the Atlantic Coast, with one or two exceptions. It was phenomenally good on Barnegat Bay and the Susquehanna Flats, at neither of which, I happened to be shooting. My biggest day's duck shooting was eighteen birds to my own gun and I had several days with only two or three birds to show for my efforts. Yet, I was shooting on a famous ducking water, Back Bay, Virginia, just south of Norfolk.

I know I had better opportunities than the average man, and fired a great many more shots

per day than the average man, but I was not satisfied. My bag was small despite untiring efforts and superior opportunities, and if I may be permitted to say so, superior ability to the average man. Consequently, I feel that the average sportsman has no reason to be satisfied with shooting conditions. I do not see where Mr. Average Man is repaid for his efforts. Something has got to be done about our shooting, or we might as well chuck it into discard, and you and I have got to do it: we cannot sit back and leave it to somebody else.

What then is the future of American shooting?

Much of our big game is passing now and will soon be gone forever; it is deplorable but nevertheless true and we shall do no good to close our eyes to the inevitable.

The antelope which is reported to be slightly on the increase could not survive for five years if the ban was lifted. Protection has made them so tame that the resulting slaughter would be a stench in the nostrils of self-respecting sportsmen like the Montana murder of half-starved elk. The answer is a limited number of licenses granted to those who want one bad enough to pay handsomely for the privilege.

The grizzly will go next—there are probably not 500 head at large today between the Canadian boundary and Mexico. Nothing in sporting enterprise is more pathetic than to hear, as I do, from a host of disappointed hunters who trek west each spring and fail to get their big bear.

Yet our all wise administrators are so busy devising new laws for the curtailment of personal liberty that they have no time to consider the pitiless extermination of the grandest North American animal, disregarding its economic value to posterity because a few lying cattlemen and sheep herders howl about the bears' depredations. In no other country in the world today is there such a magnificent animal without at least a semblance of protection.

The elk must follow despite any effort to save them—being like the buffalo and antelope creatures of the range, they cannot contend with encroaching civilization and twenty years from now will only be shot on private preserves.

Perhaps we may still have a few sheep and goats fifty years hence, but certainly not longer under existing conditions. They can only be preserved by closing certain areas while others are opened to shooting at regular periods on al-

ternating years as is done in the Alps with the chamois.

The black bear and the white-tail deer are the only two certain supports of future American big game shooting, with the moose running a good third because they are the most capable of contending with the advancing civilization and its attending conditions.

If you give little bruin with the deer half a chance he will hold his own for centuries, but let us for our posterity's sake and as sportsmen, afford him the protection of a closed season and, acknowledging him to be the inoffensive good little sport which he is, prohibit the trapping of him like vermin. (Several states now protect bear.)

In regard to smaller quadrupeds and feathered game, conditions are different and for the immediate future, the outlook is decidedly brighter. As I have stated before, they have safely passed through their darkest days—like the deer and black bear being intelligent, quick to learn, and resourceful. They have taken on a new strategy of self protection and are better able to fend for themselves than ever before, having adapted themselves to the encroachment of man—and

through closer contact with him have become more wary. In plain language they get away faster and do it sooner—wherefore the successful sportsman must be a better shot today than at any time in the past.

All migratory birds are unquestionably on the increase. That doesn't necessarily mean that we are getting more shooting. A lot of the best grounds are being preserved and clubbed, a lot of it has so many shooters on it that the young sportsman who can handle the birds doesn't get an opportunity to do so because of the interference of others of less experience. Furthermore, the fowl is not getting a chance to rest. We have got to have sanctuaries and game preserves for their protection in the nesting seasons—we won't get them by sitting back and wishing for them, and by writing fairy tales about American Sport.

Despite their increased numbers the coastal fowl lie out in the deep water in large flocks and as a rule refuse to decoy. They no longer come in close to the points unless forced to by severe weather and hunger and when the marsh ducks come in to feed, they do so under cover of darkness and are away again at the crack of dawn.

What else can be expected of them? When

there are ten hunters for every one of thirty or forty years ago—when every hundred yards of shore front holds a gunner and the bays are covered with batteries hammering at the fowl from October 15th to February 1st, day in and day out. The man who pays thirty dollars for a battery on Great South Bay today is a "sucker" and most of us know it and realize it before we start. But the old game has a lure which compels us to dig down in our jeans once or twice each season, even though we know that the chances are that we will only kill a dozen trash ducks unfit to eat. This is one of the greatest ducking waters in the world whose only fault is that of being too close to New York City. To a less degree the same condition applies all over the country—too many gunners for game.

This situation in regard to wild-fowling, which was the first to become congested due to the sport being restricted to smaller areas, will soon become true of the upland. But these birds being unable to go to the ocean for temporary protection must in the end succumb.

Southern partridge are taking to the woods, deserting the fields in most localities and are about three times as difficult to bag as in the old

days. As a result they are temporarily coming back where they were nearly shot out a few years ago.

Turkey are holding their meagre own as a whole and will not become extinct as it has been successfully demonstrated that they can be reared on the large preserves.

Pheasants are proving to be here as abroad preëminently the best of birds for congested shooting conditions and are on the increase all over and in time will bear the brunt of the free shooting.

All of this is most gratifying. I don't care how difficult they one and all become to bag, just so long as I may continue to see them and have the excuse to burn some powder. More power to our feathered friends!

But where does all this lead us?

Each year their fight for life becomes more difficult—their present increase is but momentary—there is a limit to their endurance and natural propagation can but little longer withstand the terrific strain.

The despoiling of our forests, the drainage of the lakes and marshes by thoughtless real estate operators and politicians; the cheap automobile; the cheaper machine-made gun; ridiculous license

fees; unrestricted shooting in the open season, together with the improvements in the roads which make the hitherto most out of the way places easily accessible, plus the enormous increase in the number of shooters—these things combined have sounded the death knell of the old American shooting and a generation will see it pass on forever.

With what regrets do I say this.

The future of the average American who loves to shoot is in the preserve, patterned after the European system which we have scorned. "Free" American shooting is almost at an end—we must preserve or quit

A few wise legislators, seeing the hand-writing upon the wall, have already appropriated goodly sums for the acquisitions of unclaimed lands to be used as public shooting grounds and refuges, and these will stem the tide for a time, but the Government cannot be expected to stock the country and provide free shooting for all. Taxpayers would never tolerate it. The propogation of game is an expensive undertaking irrespective of how expertly conducted.

Federal and State public shooting grounds can only be expected to provide a little sport for

those who otherwise could not afford to shoot at all. It is private enterprise which must bear the major part of the burden.

Unfortunately, the average American has a strong antipathy for the private preserve and the club, which he looks upon as an encroachment of his rights, and this must be dispelled. The success of future organizations and the club will largely depend upon their ability to grasp the situation in their immediate vicinity, and by fairness and generosity dispell the feeling of resentment against them. Otherwise their intolerance will be hurled back at them like a boomerang. There are unfortunately too many short sighted clubs now which have spread the seed of antagonism.

It is not too much for them to consider opening their gates for local gunners a couple of times a season, at least upon part of their property. Nothing would bring heartier cooperation or discourage so much that ban upon the European preserve—poaching. This antagonism to the preserve can be dispelled for in the future the club will play an important part in providing sport for the poor men who could never afford to become members. Much of the game is sure

to overflow onto free lands, and the authorities can see to it that there is a certain amount of free shooting in each locality, just as they regulate the operation of business combines.

The average shooter can be convinced of the beneficial result of the preserve for his own interest, particularly as the public shooting grounds will thereby be relieved of an insupportable strain which would otherwise be imposed upon them if everyone would see his sport upon them.

The real sportsman who can afford better will not put up with these battues—either he will own a preserve, join a shooting syndicate formed by a few like himself acquiring the privileges to a section of farm land, or he will trust to the generosity of some friendly farmer or landed acquaintance.

This issue will be forced by the farmers, who will not much longer tolerate the invasion of their property by an increasing horde each year, many of which tear down fences, let out cattle and even put the life of the old man himself in danger. Each season more of them are posting. Nor can he be encouraged to take an interest in game preservation, caring for the birds, feeding them his grain during hard winters for strangers to shoot.

Worse, many farmers are actively opposed to preservation, seeing in it only an encouragement for further trespass upon their land.

Until such a time as the sole right to the game is invested in the property owner, I can see no hope of successful game preservation on a large scale.

This is not the view of the majority of sportsmen who stand for free shooting and will fight for it as long as it is possible. It is not a pretty outlook for me—a poor man—but I see no prospect of good shooting in future generations except through paying for it. It must be reared and artificially propagated. The farmer cannot afford to be a philanthropist, but he will care for his game when he sees an opportunity thereby of reaping a modest return.

There is no logical excuse for attaching socialistic views to shooting. There has been too much sentimental slush about the inalienable right of the Free American People to their birthright to hunt.

What did the people do with this birthright? The game fields of North America were the greatest the world ever knew seventy-five years ago. Where is it—all the buffalo, the elk, the

sheep, antelope, bear, even the fowl and upland game. Where is it today? Almost swept off the face of the earth. Much of it is extinct; some of it had to go ultimately but not so soon—not by a hundred years. We wantonly destroyed one of the greatest gifts of God. Those who dance must pay the piper or their children must.

Now we can go without game to shoot or pay for more. As a matter of fact, game has always been held too cheaply in America. If we had had to pay more for it as in Europe, there would be far more to shoot today.

When this was a free country in the process of colonization, it was logical to say that the game was free as the land upon which one was free to squat and call his own. A plentiful supply of game is essential to colonization.

The free land is taken up and the free game mostly shot up. If we want land today we buy it and if we want to hunt fifty years hence we will have to purchase the privilege.

The forests were despoiled in a like manner. If nature grows another in the course of time upon your land which you have cleared, drained and protected from fire, should every Tom, Dick and Harry have an "inalienable right" to hew it

down for their own hearths? If you have a few natural rabbits and partridge on your property which you feed in winters and protect by keeping down the vermin, shooting the hawks, trapping foxes, etc., has every "free" American a right to jump over your fence and shoot them for you? Stuff and nonsense.

One might as well agree that everyone has a right to your garden, your car or your wife, despite the fact that you earned them and protect them. No man can claim a legitimate right to anything which he has not the ability to earn or the good fortune to fall heir to.

This freedom stuff has been worn threadbare. You do not question the right of the municipality to regulate how you shall drive down the road, which belongs to the commonwealth of which you are a part. Why question the right of the property owner to his own land and all thereon?

Do not misunderstand me. There will be wild sections in this country for centuries to come where free shooting will be had, but they will be too far removed for the average dweller in a congested district to reach for a few days' gunning.

There will, I believe, always be some sort of shooting in America for all.—Municipal, State or

National preserves, limiting one to a certain number of shooting days a year, perhaps even in alternating years as the demand increases. We will have free shooting grounds as surely as we have free golf courses and free bathing beaches, for the future protection of those who will not be able to afford private clubs with their attending advantages. But the man who really cares enough about gunning will be poor indeed who cannot rake up a few dollars to join a local organization. This is a large country—not like England, France, or Germany—shooting privileges should as a result be cheaper, for a long time at least.

But they must be paid for, and it is but reasonable that the major part of the expense should be borne by private enterprise—a Government cannot feed the nation.

Wise sportsmen are already preparing for it. It is none too soon for you to do so; the longer you wait the more expensive it will be. Clubs, county game protective associations and county leagues are springing up all over the country.

Feather your nest now.

The game of the future will be principally:

White Tail Deer
Black Bear
Ringneck Pheasant
Bob White, Partridge
Rabbits
and Wildfowl

The rest, like the Red Man, will pass away with the old glorious days of Free America. No one will regret the passing of the old system more than I do, who have enjoyed some of the best that it afforded, but I realize that we will soon have restricted shooting or no shooting at all.

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